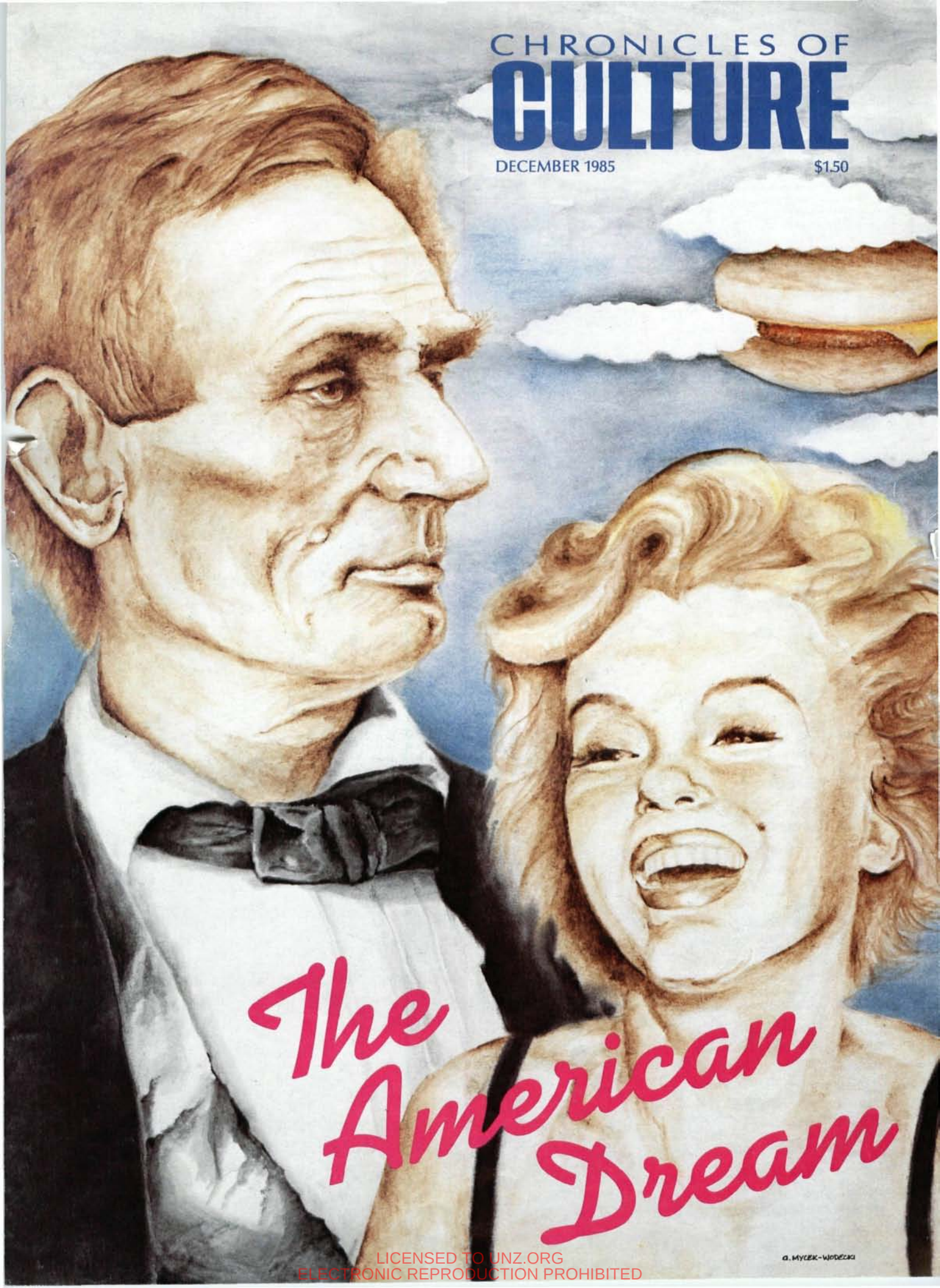

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THE AMERICAN DREAM

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CONTENTS

PERSPECTIVE

All Gone in Search of America 4

Anglophones and ideologues are rekindling the fire under America's melting pot, but will this make the stubborn lumps coalesce?

by Thomas Fleming

OPINIONS

Life, Interpreted Lucely 6

—*Life: The Second Decade 1946-1955*; photographs selected by Doris C. O'Neil

Capturing Marilyn Monroe and Roger Bannister in black and white was the easy part for *Life*. The hard part was turning their editorial "New America" into reality.

by Allan C. Carlson

The American "Collective" (Day)Dream 9

—Kevin Starr: *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*

The images of California worked out by editors and orange-crate manufacturers became national myths with the arrival of Hollywood.

by Jay Mechling

Between Auschwitz and Armageddon 11

—Noam Chomsky: *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*
—Sam B. Girgus: *The New Covenant: Jewish Writers and the American Idea*
—Peter Grose: *Israel in the Mind of America*

To American Jews catechized in secular political orthodoxies, Zionism and Israel are often embarrassing anachronisms.

by Will Morrisey

Gatsby Without Clothes 14

—Peter DeVries: *The Prick of Noon*

If Jay Gatsby had been a pornographer and told his own story, Peter DeVries' latest novel would be a copyright infringement.

by James Bowden

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The Costs of Culture 16

—Stephen Miller: *Excellence & Equity: The National Endowment for the Humanities*
—*A Report to the Congress of the United States on the State of the Humanities*

The National Endowment for the Humanities has not yet turned into a national "ministry of culture," but current crusaders to "de-politicize" the Endowment will do their best.

by M.E. Bradford

VIEWS

Still in Saigon—in My Mind 20

The latest casualties of Vietnam are the journalists and commentators shell-shocked by the popularity of Rambo and Chuck Norris.

by E. Christian Kopff

Henry James at the Sacred Fount 25

Henry James distilled a purified sense of decorum and manners in his art, but he never found the divine wellspring of all forms.

by Thomas P. McDonnell

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

Role confusion in America: rock stars pose with country singers; English profs quote Marx and let capitalists champion avant-garde verse; NASA casts its astronauts as sexual revolutionaries. 35

TYPEFACES

A Woman's Dreams 38

VITAL SIGNS

THEATER

On the Waterfront: *Singin' in the Rain; Big River* reviewed by Caroline Morgan 41

SCREEN

Teenagers and Lower Forms of Life: *Kiss of the Spider Woman* 42

Old Dutch Buggies & New Asian Shrimp Boats: *Witness; Alamo Bay* reviewed by Roland A. Alum Jr. and Tom Rojas 43

ART

The Man Who Loved Birds by Shehbaz H. Safrani 44

BOOKSHELVES

COMMENDABLES

Brezhnev and Beyond: Michael Warder on *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente* 28

More Than Monkey Business: *On the Evolution of Human Behavior: The Argument From Animals to Man*

IN FOCUS

So Long, St. George: Stephen L. Tanner on *The Slaying of the Dragon: Modern Tales of the Playful Imagination* 29

Erratic Entrepreneurs: Gavin D. Arbuckle on *Bernard M. Baruch: The Adventures of a Wall Street Legend; J.P. Morgan* 30

Socialism Sanctified: Brent Chesley on *From Berkeley to East Berlin and Back*

Laborious Hedonism: *The New Achievers: Creating a Modern Work Ethic* 32

Wet Cement: Brian Murray on *The Wasp Factory*

Worms in the Big Apple: David Vicinanzo on *American Survivors: Cities and Other Scenes*

DEPARTMENTS

REVISIONS

Resurrecting the Sixties: *Seeds of the Seventies: Values, Work, and Commitment in Post-Vietnam America* 8

Restoring Order: *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* 22

We the Peoples: *The Anti-Federalist: Writings by the Opponents of the Constitution; The Essential Anti-Federalist* 36

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 34

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From the Lower Right by John Shelton Reed 37

BOOKS IN BRIEF 13

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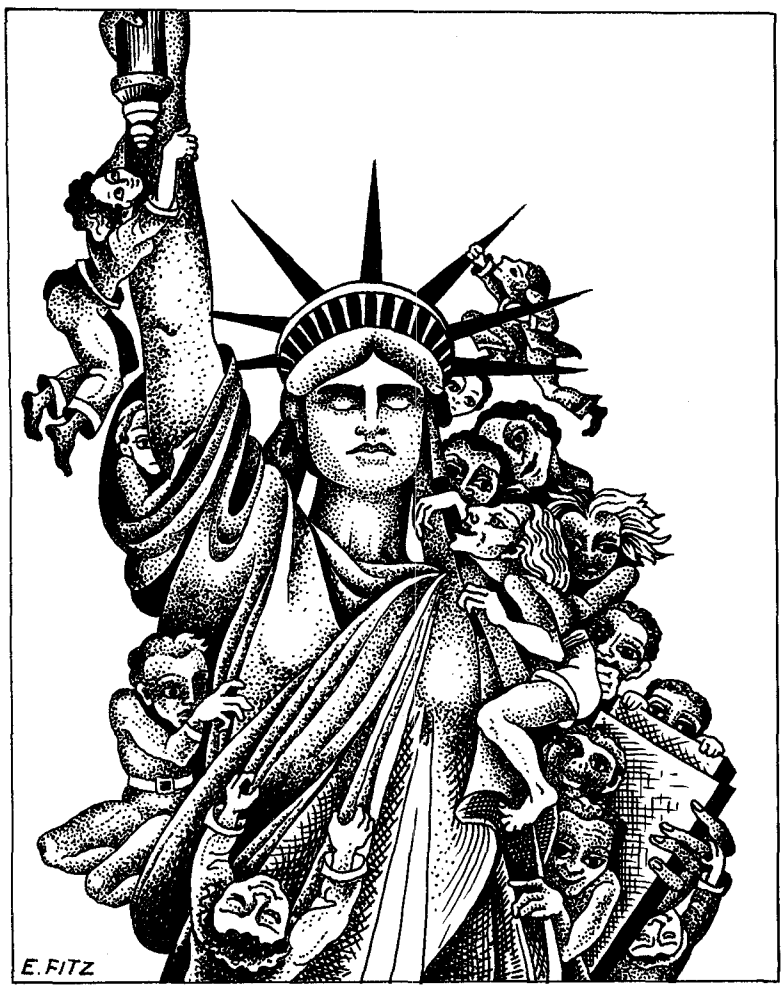
ALL GONE IN SEARCH OF AMERICA

by Thomas Fleming

What does it mean to be an American? Major debates over legislation and proposed constitutional amendments raise the question. Without stretching a point too much, it is easy to see the American identity as the underlying question on the immigration issue, the Equal Rights Amendment, and perhaps even in the debate over abortion. It comes out very clear in discussion of the English Language Amendment sponsored last year by Senator Huddleston of Kentucky and supported by U.S. English, a group headed by former Senator and linguist S.I. Hayakawa.

The amendment would make explicit a fact of life obvious to anyone that does not live in Miami or Laredo: the language of England has become the tongue of the United States. Opposition to the amendment comes largely from the Hispanic community and the professional "rights" lobby. The *Christian Century* is sharp enough to detect "a suspicious odor of anti-Hispanic prejudice" in this latest effort to keep a crust from forming on the melting pot.



Much of the controversy centers around bilingual education. Current studies estimate there are more than 3.5 million children who "need" some education to be given in their native language if they are to make an orderly progress through school. An article in *USA Today* goes further in calling for "continuing attention to the child's heritage and culture" as a means of "stimulating both comprehension and motivation." The opponents of the English Language Amendment apparently see nothing strange in the fact that two of the strongest critics of bilingualism are Sam Hayakawa and Richard Rodriguez. In his autobiography *Hunger and Memory*, Rodriguez argues that bilingualism constitutes a rejection of the American heritage as a "disease."

The amendment would probably win the support of a large number of Americans. I suspect many of them will be quick to say something like: Love it or leave it. If you're unwilling to accept the United States as an English language country, you don't have to come here. On a somewhat higher level, George Will argues that our "Anglo culture" is more than a matter of language: it includes "the political arrangements bequeathed by the men of July 4, 1776."

There are those (Will is not one of them) who see the Declaration of 1776 as a sufficient condition for American unity and natural rights as a secular creed of faith replacing religious orthodoxy. In their eyes, America has never been a nation, but only an opportunity to pursue happiness, and they are prepared to grind under their heel any peculiarity of the American inheritance which conflicts with their ideals. Our particularly British notions of self-reliance and civil liberty—the real basis of our independence from Britain—were forced to give ground to the central European doctrines of state socialism espoused by many immigrant intellectuals who learned to formulate their alien creeds in the language of Jefferson and Paine. America may be the only country in history in which the newest arrivals felt free to pronounce on the national character. As a mercenary officer told General Dick Taylor, the son of President Zachary Taylor, "We will teach you what it means to be an American."

Most immigrants did not follow the lead of the agitators and ideologues who had found asylum among a people whose kindness has always exceeded their prudence. The

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Germans, Swedes, Irish, and Poles were eager to become real Americans, "hundred percenters." While their clergymen and leaders deplored the loss of ethnic identity, the ethnics knew better. If America was going to be *their* country, then they were going to have to become *her* people.

But the assimilation of so many new citizens would be a formidable task for any country. For a nation already rent by divisions, it was almost impossible. Even before the Revolution, there had been profound differences between commercial and agrarian interests, churchmen and dissenters, North and South—and, even in the South itself, between the civilized low country and the wild up-country. Of course, each period had its apostles of unity: the high Federalists in the founding generation, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster in the "Silver Age." The last of the great unionist statesmen was the little giant of Illinois, Stephen Douglas. Douglas' defeat in the Presidential election of 1860 was a sure sign that the union had dissolved. Although the unionist policies have sometimes been attacked as the subjugation of the West and South to the interests of the Northeast, Clay, Webster, and Douglas offered a vision of America we need to recover: a unity forged in the struggle to defend our rights as Englishmen and yet tolerant of diversity.

But the beginning of the great *Volkerwanderung* came just at the time of the national bloodletting that symbolized our disunity. In the past hundred years, it has been increasingly difficult to piece together a coherent American mosaic out of so many fragments of ethnic groups, regional cultures, and the "forty jarring sects" of religion and antireligion. It is North against South, East against West, rich against poor, college-educated homosexual Taoists from Cambridge against Midwestern farm family Methodists. The American visage begins to dissolve in the infinite mitosis of race, class, occupation, sex, and age groups.

There have been attempts to recreate an American identity around Walter Lippman's "public philosophy" or John Courtney Murray's "consensus" based on natural law or even on the images presented by Henry Luce in *Life* magazine. Well-intentioned as they were, such efforts are doomed to failure. National character cannot be enforced by a clerical aristocracy, because nationhood is not the product of ideology. It is shared experiences that make a people, not the bloodless "common values" of natural rights or even natural law.

What defines a nation is a vexing question that cannot be answered in a few sentences. Obviously, a homogeneous tribal people are a nation, sharing a common language, culture, and—so they believe—descent. In the same way, people used to speak of the German nation, although the Germans have never been united since the days of the Holy Roman Empire. But is Great Britain a nation? It is certainly a *state*, but three nations—the English, the Scots, and the Welsh. (To this day, whenever the *London Times* quotes "There'll always be an England," any number of outraged Scots will write in to point out there hasn't been an England since the Act of Union.)

The case of Britain raises an interesting point. England and Scotland, after centuries of quarreling, were united in the person of James VI & I, but it was a union of crowns and not of nations until 1707. Still, there is something real and palpable about a living monarch. All the public symbols and ceremonies of Britain emphasize the unity in the crown. Other attempts at union usually involve conquest and assimilation on the Roman model.

America has not been a nation in the obvious and simple sense since the 1860's. It is closer to being a sort of empire under a common legal and political system. It even has a universal high culture spread from one end to another, but few Americans would write about their country with the passionate loyalty of French writers like Péguy or Barrès. Perhaps the best models for us to look to are the successful polyglot empires of Rome, Byzantium, and the Hapsburgs, in which the different constituents—ethnic as well as religious—are bound together in a mystical unity represented by the "national" symbols of the state and recollection of the collective history.

The alternative is the ideological reconstruction of a new national identity. The greatest experiment along those lines has been made by the Soviet Empire. For all their attempts to annihilate religious and ethnic identities, Party leaders face a rising tide of Islamic nationalism and an apparently indestructible intransigence in what used to be called the captive nations. What an American ideology could hope to accomplish is not at all clear.

It is important to understand what Luce and Murray had on their minds. At the end of World War II, America emerged—almost by default—as the leader of the Free World. A divided nation, a people unsure of itself, was not likely to play a responsible part on the world's stage. The image of America so many of us grew up with in the 40's and 50's was not entirely natural. As Allan Carlson has pointed out in a number of essays (see "Life, Interpreted Lucely" in this issue), many American leaders made a conscious effort to construct a new vision of a democratic, suburban America.

It was this vision—embodied in textbooks, civics classes, and speeches of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson—that we took to war with us in Korea and Vietnam. In the end, it proved to be a dream from the gates of ivory, a will o' the wisp that led us on to destruction. America in the 1960's was a nation almost as divided as it was in the 1860's. If there is a "lesson of Vietnam," it should include a warning against attempts to impose an artificial uniformity on the American people.

The initial mistake lies in the perception of the American people as 200+ million individuals. Viewed from a height of several thousand feet, the swarming masses spread across this continent might convey an impression of uniformity, and their motions might seem to make part of some grand design. But it is inappropriate to look at us as either a conglomerate mass or as individuals. To work out a national identity on the basis of individuals makes as much sense as explaining the hardness of an iron bar at the subatomic level or ascribing the wetness of water to the qualities of free oxygen and free hydrogen. We don't live as individuals—or as members of the faceless masses portrayed by artists addicted to socialist realism. We live in families, neighborhoods, and communities. We define ourselves socially as members of churches, unions, and professions, graduates of

(continued on page 18)

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Life, Interpreted Lucely *by Allan C. Carlson*

". . . where the pictures for the page atone."
—Alexander Pope

***Life: The Second Decade 1946-1955*; Photographs selected by Doris C. O'Neil; Little, Brown; Boston.**

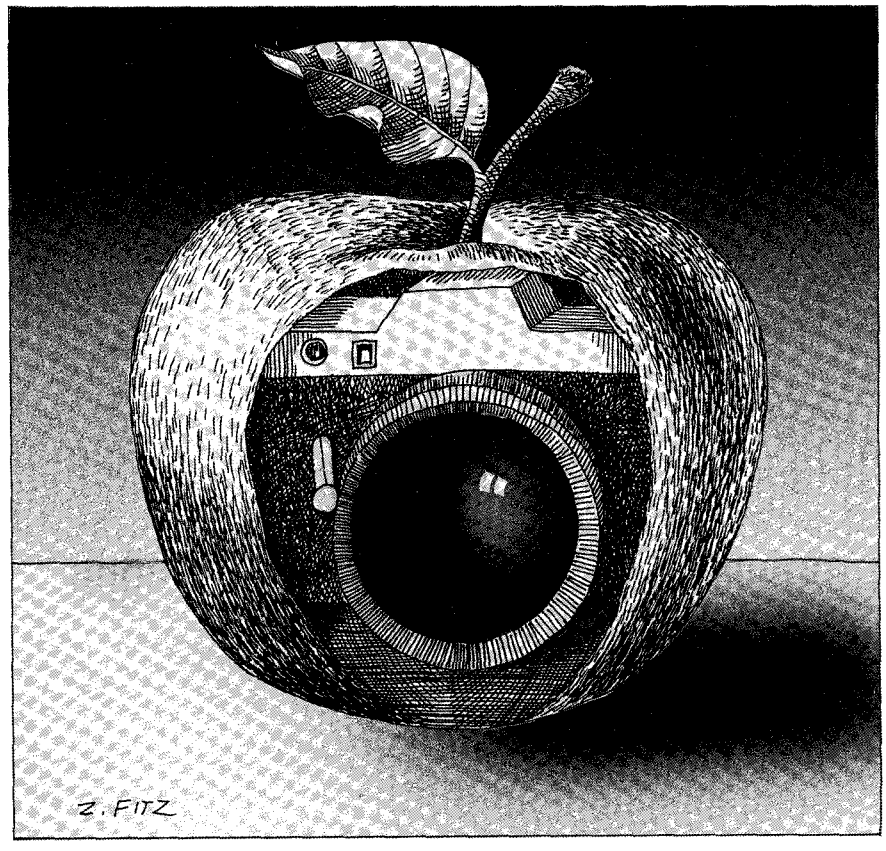
No contemporary could write promotion copy quite like Henry Luce. His 1936 prospectus for a new magazine featuring photographs, tentatively called *The Show-Book of the World*, still has few equals:

> To see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things—machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man's work—his paintings, towers and discoveries; to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within rooms, things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and many children; to see and to take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed. . . . [This] is the mission now undertaken by a new kind of publication.

Under its more familiar name, *Life* did transform journalism in America. Prior to its appearance, photographs were still considered to be the vulgar and trivial side of the magazine trade. Luce, however, understood the magic of the still shot, its ability to arouse emotions, to convey immediacy, to tell a story. Employing new innovations in high-speed printing, he introduced the weekly magazine, price 10¢ a copy, that delivered the world in pictures to the American middle class.

With all of human existence as its subject, *Life* in the early years presented a jumbled mélange of news reports, features, shorts, and single photos, material that often blended into the sensationalistic, the mildly erotic, and the weird. Yet contrary to the predictions of the experts, the formula worked. For several years, demand for the new magazine exceeded supply. Circulation climbed rapidly, reaching five million by the early 1940's. During the war, the magazine actually seemed to be transformed into a symbol of America, becoming a national institution as familiar as the baseball diamond.

Yet publishing success did not long satisfy Luce. Restlessly, he sought to turn the magazine into something more. An editorial page was added in 1941. His famed essay of the same year, "The American Century," hinted at a still broader thrust. The world of the 20th century, he wrote, "if it is to come to life in any nobility of health and vigor, must be to a significant degree an American Century." The fundamental trouble was that while America stood as the most powerful and vital nation on the globe, its citizens were unable to accommodate themselves spiritually and practically to that fact. The United States could not endure, Luce concluded, unless "there courses strongly through its



Allan Carlson is executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.

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veins from Maine to California the blood of purpose and enterprise and high resolve."

Pearl Harbor did provide America, for a time, with a compelling sense of direction; and *Life* enlisted to defeat the Axis. Yet by 1944, Luce was again fretting about America's lack of purpose and the need to gird up this land for sustained adventure and influence overseas. "The American scene must have totally new expression after this war," he confided to his editorial colleagues in an internal memorandum. "If we win the war on the terms we are now fighting, America enters a new era." This new America, Luce concluded, would not be based on the old urban milieu, composed of ethnic neighborhoods, machine politics, and grimy factories. Rather, it would rise out of an acceleration of the vast movement of peoples into the suburbs. The old cities were emptying, he said, and the "mass movement of the new living after this war is going to give someone a great publishing opportunity."

Accordingly, *Life* was repositioned as the magazine of the "New America." A major 1947-48 publicity blitz described the significance of this phrase: "There are more people—12-1/2 million more than there were before the war. . . . There is more education . . . [a]nd a better educated public means a new widespread desire for the goods and services that go with a higher standard of living." A multimedia presentation under the same title and shown to hundreds of thousands of politicians, businessmen, and advertising executives described "the New America" as based on "our new found confidence, our awakening to the new and almost limitless opportunities which lie within our power." New wealth coursed through America, the script said. In 1946, 28 million families exceeded the $2,000 income level, compared to only seven million a decade before. Americans were growing accustomed to the "good things of everyday living," and there was a "new and wider interest in the products of [a] higher standard of living."

In short, *Life* executives labeled the America of the late 1940's "a completely different world" from that of a mere decade before, a nation enjoying an unprecedented cornucopia of goods and services. On many coffee tables, moreover, lay one special magazine. The 15 million *Life*-reading families represented 36 percent of all families in the country. As the promotional people concluded, *Life* was "the greatest advertising force . . . in the New America."

Luce was not content merely to report on and sell to these suburbanizing Americans, though. As he explained in a 1948 memo to *Life's* managing editor, the magazine's purpose was "to interpret American life and in interpretation give leadership toward the promotion and defense of what we feel to be good and correction to that which is poor or bad." As a critical first step, he urged an editorial effort to instruct *Life* readers on their bonds to Western civilization. The drama of Western culture, Luce maintained, had culminated in the creation of the United States of America and this fact demanded that all Americans take stock of their civilization at the historical moment "when the U.S. has become the heir and chief guardian of the whole body of Western Civilization against the forces of reactionary neo-barbarism."

The second great task facing American civilization and *Life* magazine, he said, lay in reconciling universal opulence and material plenty with Christian morality and the Western tradition. Put another way, the inhabitants of the New America needed to be shown how to live the good *and* moral life. *Life's* "modern living" section, Luce maintained, would serve as the nexus between the magazine's editorial content and its advertising. It would show that there was "nothing *per se* immoral or wrong with material goods," provided that their producers and consumers were "concerned with their use for 'good' rather than 'bad' ends."

The result was the *Life* magazine of the Second Decade, 1946-1955. In almost every issue, serious discussions of Medieval Christian philosophy or the Roman Catholic heritage were juxtaposed with resort fashions, brassiere ads, and photos of Hollywood starlets. Readers were taught that "civilization" wasn't just a word; as Luce put it, "it's a something that 'means you!'" They were also instructed on how to consume within the bonds of this civilizational heritage. Today, the combinations of images found in *Life* from this era often seem silly, crass, ludicrous. Yet to Luce, his editors, and much of their readership, this linkage of the spiritual to the material had real purpose: to give definition and direction to "a nation destined to lead the world in education, in high standard of living, in commerce, and government and human relations."

Life: The Second Decade, 1946-1955 is a collection of 200 photographs culled from the 156,000 prints in the *Life* picture collection. In them, one finds the substance and the contradictions of the postwar American civilization that Luce sought to define and celebrate. One sees the seemingly endless expanses of tract houses on undulating streets in suburban California, the well-dressed audience with 3-D glasses watching *Bwana Devil*, the patterned components of a Lustron prefabricated house, and the beds, dishes, and food made, washed, and processed by Marjorie McWeeney of Rye, New York, the typical American housewife. One also sees the jarring clash between the different America existing alongside the "new" one: the austere facial lines and flowered hat of an Iowa farm woman presiding at a Presbyterian church supper set against fashion model Lily Carlson walking down Park Avenue; the wholesome winner of the 1949 Pillsbury Bake-Off set against the hard scowl of a woman in a Puerto Rico gambling salon; the blue-collar anger of white youth participating in a Cicero, Illinois, race riot set against the members of Sigma Chi fraternity singing of the girls of their dreams.

Many familiar photos are found in this compilation: Marilyn Monroe's legs revealed to a leering Tom Ewell; Roger Bannister breaking the four-minute mile; Hungarian rebels futilely throwing rocks at a Russian tank; a bemused Robert Taft holding a chicken; a high-stepping drum major followed by his youthful admirers; and two sweating, Black gold miners in a Johannesburg, South Africa mine. Also included are several moving photographic essays, an art form pioneered by *Life*. These include W. Eugene Smith's extraordinary works, "Country Doctor" and "Maude Collen, Nurse

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Midwife." Found near the end of the volume are the more disturbing icons of the New America: a happy New York family, mother impeccably dressed, in their radiation shelter; and the pitted test mannequins wrenched out of shape by an atomic blast at Yucca Flat, Nevada.

Most of *Life*'s photographers —among them Margaret Bourke-White, David Duncan, Philippe Halsman, Alfred Eisenstadt, and Cornell Capa—probably shared little of Henry Luce's enthusiasm for the New American Civilization that he hoped to help shape through the pages of his magazine. Indeed, in introductory comments to this volume, Capa notes how "we are blessed with hindsight in our assessment of world history" and can now recognize "that the editors of *Life* had their own conceptions and prejudices in selecting what they considered newsworthy, valid, interesting or trend-setting for a given week." Yet the photos in this volume transcend the politics and the visions of Luce and his co-workers. Here, we do see life and can take pleasure in the seeing. cc

REVISIONS

Resurrecting the Sixties

Nostalgia for the 60's may now be a tenure requirement at many of the country's leading universities, especially in California and New England. Arthur Stein is a case in point. In his new book *Seeds of the Seventies: Values, Work, and Commitment in Post-Vietnam America* (University Press of New England; Hanover, NH; $18.00), Stein presents himself as one more academic revolutionary, pining for the "youthful idealism" of the 60's and looking desperately for manifestations of the same spirit in the 70's and 80's. Of course, he is not interested in the real legacy of the 60's —the plagues of illiteracy, drug addiction, and pornography that stunned so many POW's returning to America in the mid-70's. Stein remains convinced that if America is to regain a "renewed sense of purpose and direction" it must look not to those who answered the call of duty in Vietnam (they, after all, "still suffer the aftereffects of their traumatic experiences in the war"), but rather to those "directly involved in antiwar activity" in the Vietnam years.

Of course, these people are no longer capturing headlines by raising Vietcong flags over their campuses as they burn their American colors. No, after Richard Nixon betrayed them by ending the draft and taking away their issue, they disappeared "beneath the surface" of media visibility. But the excitement of public righteousness is hard to give up, so the same activists who had once dominated the news broadcasts by denouncing American involvement in Indochina soon found they could achieve the same effect by denouncing American involvement in America. In the search for journalists' attention, the anti-Vietnam movement metamorphosed into what Stein sympathetically calls "new alternatives" crusades, including "participatory politics, women's and minority rights, concerns of children and senior citizens, producer and consumer cooperatives, peace conversion economics. . . ." The list is as long and as predictable as a William Sloan Coffin sermon.

Stein believes that only such movements can "keep the spark of idealism alive" in an age of "extreme individualism" such as ours. In applauding the crusade for "social justice and a more peaceful world order," he insists that the varieties of social activism that he surveys cannot be understood within "conservative or liberal labels." Perhaps some of those groups rejecting technological utilitarianism in favor of small-community agrarianism do not fit neatly in right/left categories. But no one who canonizes the Berrigan Brothers, Bella Abzug, Scott Nearing, Tom Hayden, and Barry Commoner, and who laments that "disorganization of the American left contributed to the right-wing victory of Ronald Reagan" is playing with an unmarked deck. Stein may not be a Soviet apologist of the *Nation* stripe, but he is clearly at home among the woolly leftists of *Mother Jones*. Don't look for Stein to suggest that anyone concerned with "basic human rights" and protecting "endangered life forms" should be fighting communist tyranny, protesting abortion, or opposing illegitimacy.

Instead, the agenda calls for demonstrating against U.S. involvement in Central America, helping others achieve psychic "transformation" into "New Age" personalities, obstructing nuclear power projects, and fighting for "justice for women." Of even higher priority are protests against American militarism and attempts to find "common ground with the leaders and people of the USSR." Nonviolent protest at an American Trident base provides "living theater" that is "encouraging," "dramatic," and "provocative." (Stein reports no pacifist demonstrations being planned for Kabul or Warsaw, perhaps because Soviet tank drivers have such a boorish sense of staging or because TV coverage is devilishly hard to arrange.) As he contemplates the future, Stein is glad that many groups are learning to put to new uses the techniques of "nonviolent direct action" first employed in the May Day 1971 protest against the Vietnam War. The thousands of Vietnamese who drowned trying to escape from their "liberators" or who were imprisoned in reeducation camps or sent to Siberia to lay pipeline for the Soviet Empire might not share Stein's enthusiasm for this conceptual breakthrough. But the Politburo is probably still applauding. After all, May Day demonstrations are their specialty. cc

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The American "Collective" (Day)Dream *by Jay Mechling*

"Some races increase, others are reduced, and in a short while the generations of living creatures are changed and like runners relay the torch of life."
—Lucretius

Kevin Starr: *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*; Oxford University Press; New York; $19.95.

Reading student applications for scholarships, as I have done on and off now for a dozen years on the undergraduate scholarships committee of the University of California, Davis, has some of the qualities of watching a Frank Capra movie. It wasn't always so in the early 1970's, when the typical successful high school student was born into a comfortable suburban California middle-class home. But by the end of the decade, the "personal statement" essays by some of the students began to resemble 19th- and early-20th-century novels, autobiographies, and oral histories about the immigrant experience in America.

It was not unusual, by the early 1980's, to read a well-written statement explaining how the candidate had escaped Southeast Asia on a boat with a remnant of his or her family, how the student thankfully arrived in California to enter junior high school barely speaking any English, and how the student's hard work and family sacrifice led to the student's graduating as valedictorian of the high school class. Teachers' and counselors' recommendations confirmed that, if anything, the students were modest in writing their personal statements. By most accounts, these students do as well at the university as they did in high school.

When I remarked on this pattern to a group of colleagues, a friend in Asian-American studies cautioned me not to make too much of this. "We are seeing only the successful ones," he warns. "What about all those who don't 'make it'?" He caught me, of course, in the positive stereotyping that is the mirror image of the negative sort, assuming that a handful of successful members of an immigrant or native racial group "proves" that they all could "make it" if only they tried.

Still, there is evidence that the "boat people" of the 1978 immigration, as opposed even to the more Westernized, better-educated, English-speaking Vietnamese immigrants after the 1975 fall of Saigon, combine strong work and education ethics that we white Americans like to think characterized our first-generation grandparents and great-grandparents. For example, a July 19, 1985, Associated Press story reported on the research project directed by Nathan Caplan at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Caplan and his colleagues studied nearly 6,000 Southeast Asian refugees—Laotian, Vietnamese, and ethnic Chinese boat people—in 1,400 households in Boston, Chicago, Seattle, Houston, and Orange County, California. The success of these immigrants stunned the researchers. Nearly two-thirds had found jobs, over a quarter of their children were getting "straight A's" in school, and within four years of arriving in the United States the "average refugee family had achieved a steady income of nearly twice the poverty level."

There is a dark side to this story, as even Frank Capra would have seen and included in a film version of this story. The fact that these Indochinese children are "shattering grade school curves" (as the Associated Press put it) means that many of their fellow students come to resent their success, and the resentment easily becomes racist. The national news media earlier this year paid special attention to the rising tide of racist expressions and violence against Asians in America, but I see it in other forms in the ethnic jokes, folk beliefs, and graffiti I collect from my students in folklore classes. How ironic is the American immigrant experience in discovering that success brings scorn and discrimination almost as surely as does failure.

If there were not a California, Americans would have to invent her. The state is the ideal testing ground for Americans' working out the sort of society that will emerge when the "new immigration" meets established American traditions and institutions. The July 8, 1985, issue of *Time* magazine devoted most of its space to articles exploring the dimensions of the "new immigration" and explaining (rather simplistically, as one might expect) the impact of this immigration upon the nation. The numbers of "new immigrants" admitted since 1961 under various refugee acts are surprising even to those who pay attention to these things, and these numbers do not even include the illegal immigrants.

California represents an intensified version of the cultural drama unfolding as these new immigrants settle in U.S. communities. California is rapidly becoming part of the Hispanic Americas; there are very large communities of Indochinese in both the north and south; and San Francisco's Chinese community has a steady influx of new immigrants. Bilingualism is a hot political and cultural issue, represented most dramatically last year by former Senator Hayakawa's ballot proposition to make English the official language of the state. The proposition fed on a panic born of a demographic reality—namely, that the "Anglos" in the state will soon be the minority population. America would be wise to watch California closely as we at the edge of the continent work by design or accident toward a modified American society.

California has a history of "new immigrants," in a sense, from the Spaniards to the present. And most Californians native to this country are only first or second-generation mi-

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grants in any case. Kevin Starr —journalist, professor of communications, and former librarian of the City of San Francisco—offers a history of California that may lend clues to understanding what needs to be America's response to the new immigration. His *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* follows *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (1973) as the next installment of an ambitious cultural history of the state. Whereas the first volume emphasizes Northern California and the state's history before 1900, the new volume takes Southern California as the embodiment of the Progressive Era "dream," and herein lies the relevance of Starr's book to the new immigration these 70 years later.

Starr's subject is the dialectic emerging "as the California of fact and the California of imagination shape and reshape each other" during this period of the emergence of a regional society and the invention of a "California dream" that would explain and justify that society. Starr deals some with the overtly imaginative materials—the novels of Mary Austin and Helen Hunt Jackson and Jack London, say, or the paintings of James Bond Francisco or the buildings by architects Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene—but Starr is canny enough to know that "imaginative materials" in a business civilization include, also, the booster literature of California politics, business, banking, and agriculture. So Starr offers us portraits of such key characters as Los Angeles *Times* publisher and real estate speculator Harrison Gray Otis, *Times* city editor Charles Fletcher Lummis, agriculture journalist Edward James Wickson, and Bank of Italy (later Bank of America) founder Amadeo Peter Giannini, all of whom contributed significantly to a story, a "mythology," about California in general and Southern California in particular. The stories were sometimes contradictory and usually departed significantly from the facts. But all understood that a people must have a set of stories and images to guide their actions, even if one function of those stories and images is to cloak economic motives in grander ethical garb.

California's first self-image was that of a frontier, which translated into the "Americanization" of the Mexican Californios. Through the three decades following the American Civil War, Mexican-held land fell into the hands of Anglo-Americans, who subdivided the ranchos into residential areas that eventually became Southern California towns and cities. Very few of the Californios learned how to do business "Yankee-style," and the Americanization process included some dramatic displays of racism and violence chronicled by Starr.

As the frontier self-image waned, California's dream-makers created a new mythology, what Starr calls the myth of "the American farm perfected." Flirting briefly with the semitropical image, California boosters settled on the more civilized Mediterranean metaphor. Image-makers as diverse as architects and designers of orange crate labels assisted in the myth, but it was LA *Times* city editor Lummis who worked the hardest to create a Spanish "mission myth" at the center of Southern California's booster ideology in the 1880's and 90's, even to the point of building a Spanish mansion, El Alisul, at Arroyo Seco. Lummis and others created a pastoral, feudal myth that justified its opposite—an industrialized, mass society. Frank Miller's Mission Inn in Riverside, the immensely successful Mission Play (an outdoor drama-spectacle), the aesthetic movement known as "Arroyo Culture," and the advertising campaigns aimed at making raisins and oranges staple foods all participated in the story.

Starr's most important point almost gets lost in his telling the stories of these colorful characters and places, but it is worth making here. Underlying the Mission Myth and related self-images was a racial myth quite in keeping with the cultural context of the period, a myth that said that "Southern California was the Anglo-Saxons' destined place." The dilemma inherent in Lummis' myth was its delicate and unresolved bringing together of Western frontier vigor and Eastern refinement.

Also departing from this booster, Mission Myth was an equally vigorous California movement toward experimenting with collectives, cooperatives, and socialist ideas. A colony system emerged in Southern California agriculture, each colony created by an ethnic group (e.g., the French in San Jose, the Germans in Anaheim, the Danes in Solvang) pursuing a quasi-utopian impulse. The agriculture cooperative movement was strong in California, with over half of the state's agriculture done by co–ops by 1920; and there were explicitly socialist farming experiments, such as the Llano del Rio colony and the Durham Settlement. The Populist and progressive movements in California also had their share of theorists, most notably Fresno journalist Chester Harvey Rowell, who urged Californians to think of themselves as a community holding a life in common and working toward its perfection.

Starr's story would be one merely of an interesting regional society were it not for the emergence of the American film industry during this period. For it is through its films that this regional society "would set national standards of American identity, as the attitudes and styles of Southern California were exported via the film industry to the rest of the nation." It fell to Southern California, in short, to create what Starr calls "the collective daydream of America." Constrained by the time limits he defines for this book, Starr deals only with the earliest pioneers in the industry, such as directors D.W. Griffith, Mack Sennett, and C.B. De Mille, producers Jesse Lasky and Adolph Zukor, and movie stars Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks. But all these stories reveal the surprising fact of the minority immigrant origins of the industry responsible for America's collective "daydream."

Starr need not have stopped in the 1920's. My earlier reference to Frank Capra was partly to acknowledge that, as film critic Richard Corliss put it in his essay on the cinema for the special "immigrants" issue of *Time*, "American cinema is truly an immigrant art form, made by immigrants for immigrants." Some of our most powerful, mythic stories about the meanings of American experience are gifts from grateful immigrants, films like Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), Fred Zimmerman's *High Noon* (1953), and Mike Nichols' *The Graduate* (1967). Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the few current films taking

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the "new immigration" as their dramatic subject matter are often created by immigrants—films like Wayne Wang's *Dim Sum* (1985) and Louis Malle's *Alamo Bay* (1985), or by native-born directors only a generation or so separated from the immigrant experience, such as Paul Mazursky's *Moscow on the Hudson* (1984) and Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983).

There is a certain irony in all this, an irony akin to the dilemma Starr identifies in Lummis' "Mission Myth" about California. This influx of new immigrants and the beginnings of a cinema "daydream" based upon their experiences are taking place at exactly the same time that social critics like Daniel Yankelovich (*New Rules*, 1981), Christopher Lasch (*The Minimal Self*, 1984), Robert Bellah, *et al.* (*Habits of the Heart*, 1985), and others are trying to explain middle-class America's "identity crisis" (perhaps a "dream crisis") and account for the seeming abandonment or radical redefinition of older notions of "success" and other aspects of the traditional "American dream."

Clearly, the new immigrants are enacting the traditional version of the dream, which forces one to ask: Who is adopting the mistaken strategy here? Are the immigrants hopelessly playing out a misleading "daydream"? Or is the American middle class making the fatal mistake of withdrawing from the public culture of shared (and, yes, disputed) symbols and stories and retreating to highly privatized worlds incapable of sustaining a personal ethic, much less a social one?

Both the recent films and the social critics I mentioned earlier explore these questions in some interesting ways I shall not recount here. My point is simply this: that it is up to those who "mint and market" (as Richard John Neuhaus says) the symbolic stories and social metaphors of the American experiment to address seriously the experiences of the new immigrants and to offer some insights into ways these newcomers reconcile their traditional home worlds and their lives in the American public culture.

These stories, the new American "collective" (day)dream, can be an important force in the revitalization of American society. The wisdom and truths that will emerge from these stories will likely confirm neither the naive optimism of some new immigrants nor the deadly pessimism of some social critics. Certainly, what will emerge will be a more complex story about America, one that must attempt to counter the racism and violence that seem to have greeted so many earlier immigrants. Sometimes in the dialectic between the America of fact and the America of imagination, to expand Starr's perspective, it is up to the imagination to instruct the reality. cc

Between Auschwitz and Armageddon *by Will Morrisey*

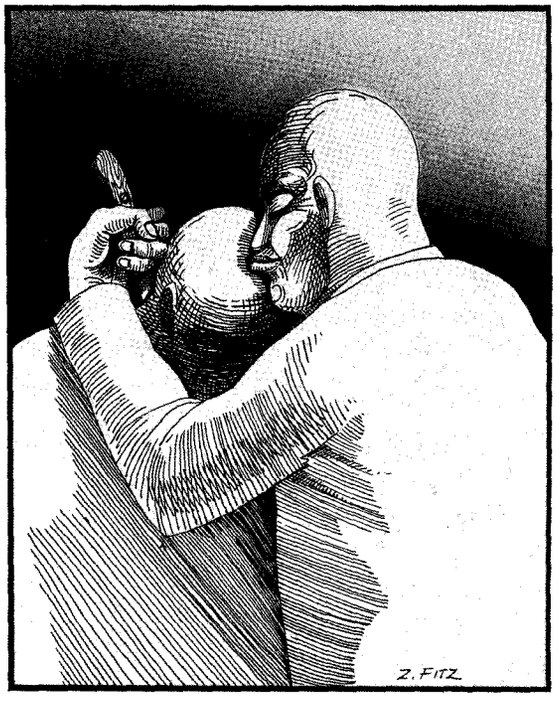
"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

—Zechariah

Noam Chomsky: *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*; South End Press; Boston.

Sam B. Girgus: *The New Covenant: Jewish Writers and the American Idea*; The University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill.

Peter Grose: *Israel in the Mind of America*; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.



Most nations know all too clearly what they believe about Jews. Americans are less sure. This beneficial uncertainty inheres in the two major traditions that shape American souls: Christianity and modern political philosophy. Peter Grose writes that the Puritans "identified with the people of the Old Testament"; until 1787 Harvard College (which then promoted an identifiable morality) required its students to learn Hebrew. But in the name of Christianity, Peter Stuyvesant unsuccessfully tried to expel from Manhattan 23 newly arrived Brazilian Jews; in general, "the early American was fixed in his belief that for [refusing to worship the Christ] the Jew had forfeited his full rights in Christian society." Among the "moderns," Thomas Jefferson unhesitatingly extended his principle of religious toleration to Jews while privately lamenting, "among them ethics are so little understood." John Adams endorsed the aspirations of Jews to return to Israel but imagined they might "possibly in time become liberal Unitarian Christians." Among both Christians and "moderns," this desire to convert Jews was strong, exhibiting that mixture of esteem and hostility any proselytizer feels for potential proselytes.

America's contemporary left has not escaped ambivalence toward Jews and the Jewish state. Grose, Girgus, and Chomsky represent, respectively, the

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liberal, left-liberal, and leftist ideologies prevalent in late-20th-century academia. Each writer illustrates the situation of world Jewry today not only by what he sees but by what he makes of what he sees.

As the sort of liberal found on the Council of Foreign Relations and the *New York Times*, Grose presents the most accurate and least colorful of the three pictures. Although titled *Israel in the Mind of America*, his book is primarily a political history of Zionism in America between the First World War and the founding of Israel.

As might be expected, during this period *political* Zionism—the desire for a Jewish *state* in Palestine—enjoyed the support of nowhere near the majority of American Jews, much less American Gentiles. American Jews wanted the right to settle peacefully in Palestine, but then as now not many wanted to exercise that right; as for Jewish sovereignty in the region, even fewer insisted on that. Ethnic, social, political, and religious divisions within American Jewry assured continued political incoherence. Typically, well-established "uptown" Jews of German origin preferred quiet, behind-the-scenes lobbying; they regarded Judaism as a religion without national/political content. Newly arrived "downtown" Jews of Russian origin preferred political activism; to them, Judaism included nationality, if not national sovereignty.

Louis Brandeis attempted to overcome these divisions by uniting Jews behind a particular form of Zionism. He added some of "downtown's" political energy to the elitism of "uptown" in an effort to make Zionism a Jewish version of Woodrow Wilson's "progressivism." This Zionism for middle-class liberals declined when World Zionist Organization leader Chaim Weizmann attacked it as insufficiently political. He found it too much a reflection of the American pragmatism that wants to "make the desert bloom" without much caring who rules the desert. But Brandeisian Zionism survived, albeit in a different form. Brandeis and his allies left the Zionist movement and involved themselves in the Democratic Party politics that led, tortuously, to American support for a Jewish state in Palestine.

The path was tortuous in part because the State Department remained anti-Zionist up to and beyond Israeli independence, for motives ranging from anti-Semitism to timidity. (Then a young diplomat in Germany, George F. Kennan best exemplified the latter when he advised against U.S. protest over Nazi anti-Semitism, "saying it would be an ineffective interference in another country's internal affairs"—a refrain he would sing more than once in his long career. Kennan would later oppose Israeli independence out of fear of a Mideast war.) Unfortunately, the complacency of Americans, including American Jews, also added to the tortuousness of the path. The saddening fact is that only the Holocaust rallied American Jews to Zionism. As late as 1944, most Americans did not credit reports of mass extermination in Europe. Felix Frankfurter explained this most tellingly: "I do not have the strength to believe it."

Quiet diplomacy and behind-the-scenes lobbying could not work without public pressure, and this finally came through the energy of Rabbi Hillel Kook (better known by his *nom de guerre*, Peter Bergson) and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. Kook was a disciple of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, but for ideological reasons Grose undervalues the Jabotinsky faction, Zionism's right wing. Grose is better on Silver, a brilliant political organizer who disdained courteous relations with Gentile politicians and, for that matter, with many fellow-Jews. Silver's one blind spot was his failure to see and respond quickly to the disaster engulfing Jews in Europe. Nonetheless, "under Silver's leadership, aroused and appalled by the 'news from Europe,' America's Jews changed." They learned to use the American political system. Congress and President Truman saw this and acted accordingly; political pressure caused such basically decent Americans to act with the vigor mere decency often lacks. While the major fight came "on the ground" in Palestine itself, American support for Israel was, of course, indispensable, and it has endured for nearly four decades.

Noam Chomsky condemns that support as one imperialism rewarding another. Grose admires Israel but deplores Jabotinsky and his "zealot," Begin; Chomsky believes all Israel governments infamous in their domination of Palestinian Arabs. The Likud Party descends from fascism, the Labour Party from Bolshevism. America's "critical supporters" of Israel remind him of American Stalinists of the 1930's and 1940's. "[T]hose who exercise real power in the U.S."—evidently, large business corporations and the CIA—find Israel a useful ally, he claims. He does not base this claim on any talks with oil company executives. Such criticism of Israel as heard, for example, during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon is merely an instance of the "feigned dissent" that has "made an impressive contribution to indoctrination in the democratic societies."

Anyone who rejects Palestinian Arab claims—"rights," in Chomsky's vocabulary—to a state west of the Jordan River is a "racist." Israeli military prowess, he argues, makes security concerns irrelevant. He accuses Jewish leaders of borrowing Hitler's rhetorical description of Czechoslovakia when they say that "a Palestinian state on the West Bank would be a dagger poised at the heart of Israel." With equal sobriety, he praises what he calls an "international consensus" held by Arabs, Soviet-bloc oligarchs, and oil-blackmailed West Europeans for a return to Israel's pre-1967 borders. Given Chomsky's professed concern for national self-determination, this is a peculiar group of nations to be surveying for political solutions to Israel's problem.

Chomsky concedes that "Israel has been and remains a vibrant democracy on the western model for its Jewish citizens," although his comments on news media "indoctrination" suggest that his joy at such vibrancy is not unalloyed. He also concedes that PLO terror is "surely to be condemned," although it "hardly matched" that of Israelis in Lebanon. He goes so far as to compare the PLO to the Zionists of the 1940's, without noting how ominous that must be in the blood-red light of his own polemic. Not only does he fail to explain how two "Zionisms" could ever occupy the same territory peacefully, but he fails to show why two such governments would be better than one. Governments generally are a bad lot, in Chomsky's opinion, and those who

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attempt to defend them are "modern state-worshippers." If states are so bad, why demand one for Palestinian Arabs? Would the PLO's compaction of Islam and Marxism ever yield some form of anarcho-syndicalism that Chomsky might favor?

The title of his concluding chapter, "The Road to Armageddon," suggests a certain pessimism about all this. Israel "drift[s] towards internal, social, moral, and political degeneration" —that is, toward religion. Israeli "Khomeinism" swells daily, as rabbis quote from "the genocidal texts" of the Torah. Chomsky expresses disgust at Israeli political scientist Mordechai Nisan, who, in Chomsky's words, would "put aside" the "Western Enlightenment" as a "heresy" against the Torah. Scriptural texts authorizing ancient Israel to enslave, exterminate, or drive out whole nations because of their idolatry are evidently a mystery and an offense to Chomsky, who advocates the modern doctrine of "human rights, equal rights." Such a doctrine gives Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs "essentially equal rights within the territory of the former Palestine."

While the Enlightenment derives "rights" from what all men *are*, the Bible judges men by what it says God wants them to *do*. The egalitarianism and toleration of the Enlightenment quells religious warfare by denying that religion is worth fighting for. But it also tends toward denying that anything at all is worth fighting for, or living for, except comfortable self-preservation. Its reductionist materialism tends to undermine the foundations of its own doctrine of "human rights," except as that may be defined in the least "righteous" terms. This can do Chomsky's formidable self-righteousness no good. Evidently, there are at least two roads to this Armageddon without revelation, and one of them passes very close to nihilism on the way.

Sam B. Girgus describes the journey of certain Jewish writers in America whereby "Jewish history was transformed by the idea of America." "America" is a compound idea consisting of "freedom, democracy, equality, and republicanism"; "in turn, Jewish writers, artists, and public figures helped to sustain and modernize this idea." This two-sided metamorphosis amounts to a "new covenant," one with rather less divine authority than the old one, but welcomed by a scattered and persecuted nation. The question one asks such writers must be, "Emancipation *for what*?" Unfortunately, Girgus can discover only the most general answers: "moral elevation" in "a competitive and brutal world," egalitarianism, "consciousness." His ideological hero is Brandeis, which explains some of the muddle. Mixing in sexual "liberation," feminism, and "identity"-assertion thickens matters still more.

Though Girgus' allegiances are tangled and misplaced, occasionally things come into focus, as when he sees that the Rosenbergs, as E.L. Doctorow depicted them in *The Book of the Daniel*, "let their belief . . . become a new kind of orthodoxy that inflates their importance, disguises their vulnerability, and encourages a kind of moral myopia, which confuses immediate self-interest, personal status, and convenience with universal truth and justice," leading to "self-destruction, partly through self-delusion." To put it more harshly than Girgus does, the Rosenbergs, as Doctorow pictures them, are not martyrs at all. Their son Daniel achieves a "fusion" of Jewishness and Americanness, finding an equilibrium in legal and parental responsibility. But because they define authority, neither fatherhood nor law comport easily with liberty and equality. Girgus sees this and worries. In his postscript, he finds both power and danger in Jewish "moral authority." "Jews embody patriarchy," and patriarchy is resented, according to Ellen Willis, one of the scholarly hens of feminism that peck Girgus' deferential skull.

However much one may deride his male feminism, a sort of uxoriousness out-of-wedlock, Girgus does uncover something important here. Liberty and equality want no authority, but mean nothing without it. That is, after an individual achieves liberty and equality, he has nothing left to do but defend them, and if he knows of nothing beyond them, he may doubt them worth defending. Liberty and equality resent, but need, some authority. Brandeis and the other pragmatist/progressive intellectuals tried to solve this problem with the doctrine of pluralism. It proved unstable. Insofar as pluralism is coherent, it is no longer pluralist, and insofar as it is pluralist it cannot cohere. America's left, whether pluralist, Marxist, or merely indignant, cannot decide what it thinks of Jews because it cannot decide what it thinks of authority and liberty. In less abstract language, it cannot decide what it thinks of God and His relation to His most problematic creature. Or it decides, with Marx, not to think, not to ask. cc

BOOKS IN BRIEF

The Soul of Indonesia: A Cultural Journey by Umar Kayam; Photographs by Harri Peccinotti; Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge, LA; $22.50. A fascinating and colorful examination of Indonesian traditions, custom, and art. In hue and scent, the flowers of Indonesian culture are unlike any found in the West, yet the human roots of family, community, and ritual seem as familiar as Iowa.

The Emperor's New Clothes: The Naked Truth About the New Psychology by William Kirk Kilpatrick; Crossway; Westchester, IL; $6.95. A critique of the antitraditional and antireligious bias of popular psychology and an indictment of the foolish clerics who have surrendered their faith to the "shrinks."

Privatizing Federal Spending: A Strategy to Eliminate the Deficit by Stuart M. Butler; Universe; New York. A senior Heritage analyst explains how America could save billions by turning postal service, wildlife protection, and even Social Security over to private administration.

The Terrors of Justice: The Untold Side of Watergate by Maurice H. Stans; Regnery; Chicago; $5.95. A much-needed revisionist account of Watergate, dedicated to "those innocents who were trampled in the rush to judgment by the media, the politicians, and a scandalized public."

Keep Off the Grass by Gabriel G. Nahas; Paul S. Eriksson; Middlebury, VT; $8.95. A physician assesses the perils of marijuana and indicts those spineless intellectuals who have condoned its use.

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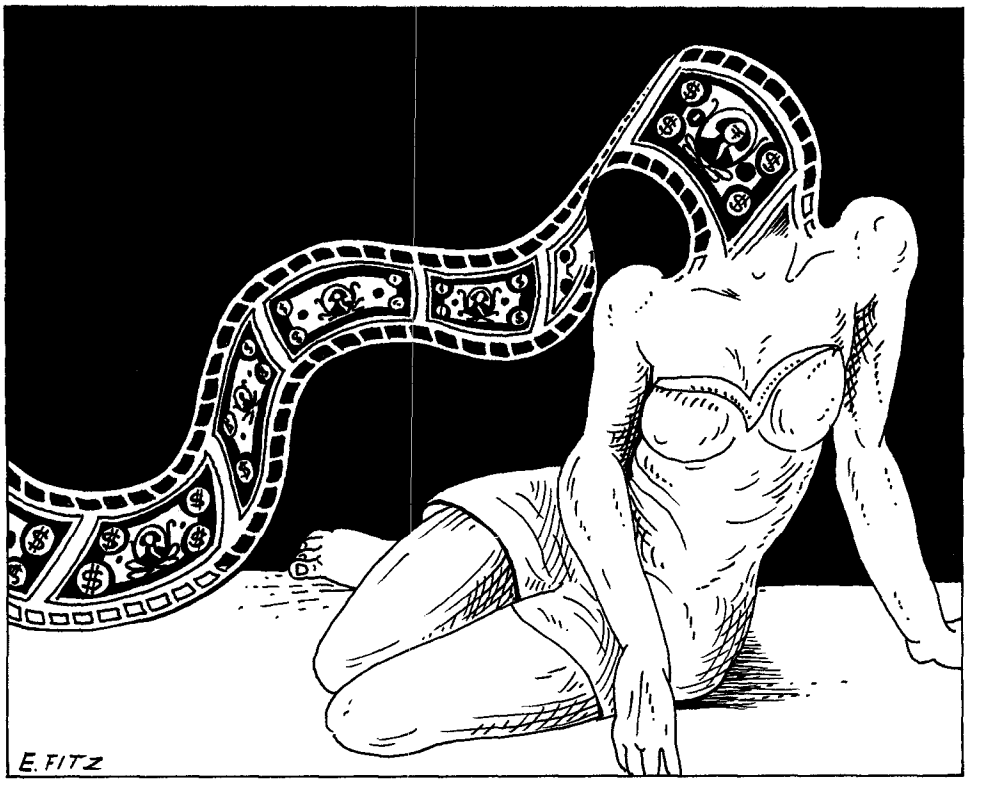
Gatsby Without Clothes *by James Bowden*

"O money, money! . . . Thou art the test of beauty, the judge of ornament, the guide of fancy, the index of temper, and the pole star of the affections."
—Daniel Defoe

Peter DeVries: *The Prick of Noon*; Little, Brown; Boston; $14.95.

It is an odd thing for someone who has written an approving book on Peter DeVries and who also has testified in court against pornography to find a book by that agreeable author, more or less, on that disagreeable subject. In *The Prick of Noon* there is a familiar DeVries type, a social climber, in this case one Eddie Teeters from Backbone, Arkansas, a fellow who has made it to the upper economic echelons by producing what he calls sexucational films.



That is, he claims they are educational. That some of them depict "group sex" is all right for Eddie, since those films show how *not* to do it. Are we to believe this? Are we even to believe that Eddie believes it? It's difficult to determine: although there are certain similarities to *The Great Gatsby*, also about a parvenu who has taken a low but fast road to wealth, there are certain differences. For one thing, the book about Gatsby is told by Nick Carraway, who gives us a more detached perspective on the heroic figure than we get here, where Eddie himself tells his own tale. There is a sophisticate available to do the telling, one Jerry Chirouble—inherited-rich and set up as a publisher just to have something to do, though he never publishes any of the manuscripts he solicits. But he's only in the narrative as the desideratum. In that regard, then, the book is similar to what *Gatsby* might have been had Jay Gatsby told it himself.

In that case, we probably wouldn't have learned that the narrator's real name was James Gatz; in this one, the withheld name is Monte Carlo, Teeter's professional tag, which of course goes in the opposite direction socially, as if Gatz had an underworld name (Kid Guts? Jimmy-the-Gat?) he hid from his neighbors. Another difference is that while Gatsby already has his fake Norman castle in place, Teeters goes shopping for his. And he's never known a Daisy.

One thing Gatz and Teeters do have in common is a general approval of The American Dream, at least as it might be conceived of by a mafioso. Fitzgerald was half in love with it himself, but picked at some of its intellectual support when he parodied at the end of his book some of Ben Franklin's Pelagian advice on self-improvement. And, of course, by choosing an underworld figure to illustrate the success story, Fitzgerald calls into question the story line itself: Gatz has the same values Tom Buchanan and Nick Carraway do, or does so far as goals are concerned—it's just that the means aren't legal.

How does DeVries feel about this in the case of Eddie Teeters? Ironic? DeVries' parents were Dutch immigrants who settled in an enclave of like-minded folk in Chicago, poor (at first: his father went from hauling coal and ice to having a moving/storage company) and hard-core Calvinist (at first: his mother never sang in church after a daughter died). Peter was sent at some sacrifice to Calvin College, but turned both against his father's hopes that he would become a minister and his peers' expectations that he make a career in politics. He has made it quite well in literature. He was publishing in *Esquire* in the 30's, was editor of *Poetry* in the early 40's, and soon thereafter reached *The New Yorker* through his own ability and through James Thurber, whom he'd met at a fund-raiser for the poetry journal. Married to another writer, Katinka Loeser, he moved to Westport when his family came along. He's often said his trip has been from The Celestial City to Vanity Fair.

He has always been equivocal about this journey. Often, as Roderick Jellema (one of his early critics) has said, DeVries' work has suggested that "sin isn't all it's cracked up to be." DeVries' people certainly are often disappointed

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James Bowden is author of Peter DeVries *(G.K. Hall; Boston).*

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in the trip after arriving at their destination. The human situation is still whatever it was to begin with, even in Merrymount, Connecticut (the setting for *Noon*), except it's more sophisticated, more aware, more *New Yorker*ish. For someone as witty as DeVries, and for his fans, that may be as much as there is. In *Noon*, though, the hero is not quite the same as in the 20-plus other DeVries novels where the fellow who has made it in advertising comes to this disillusion. The typical DeVries protagonist may have produced heavily suggestive commercials exploitative of women and pandering to men, but that's still not porn. Or, when the narrator was a writer, he may have written erotically, but that's not porn. (Eros is the sophisticate's porn?) And always he groans at women who say *ices* (I sez), at men whose *hopefully* modifies nothing.

Here it's good ol' boy Eddie Teeters, though, who is the gauche one. At the novel's opening, he is only six months past mispronouncing *epitome* (how does he do on *epigone*?) and now wants to get so well set in exurbia that eventually he can have children who will reject him and all he's striven for as "plastic." A different perspective, then. Very soon he meets *his* Daisy, his first "nice" girl. She is Cynthia Pickles, a toothsome sophisticate who wants backers for an avant-garde journal she is editing. To her, Teeters says he "must of made a delible impression on you . . . "—this after she has turned right-side-up his copy of *Existential Thought Since Kierkegaard*, over which he had been eyeing her at poolside. The pool is a public one taken over from a failed country club: would Chirouble go there? would Cynthia? I dunno: I'm a new boy myself, and as such, one trembles for Teeters—waiting for him to saying something like "nest pa?"

There is, as is usual in DeVries books, an alternative female for the narrator to choose, a woman who is usually a bit too tacky or prurient or too tackily prurient to be ultimately satisfactory as a mate. In this instance Toby Snapper, a waitress in the converted club, is available: she is available indeed, but since Teeters hopes to raise himself "by his own . . . petard," she doesn't seem quite right. As usual, there are other female asides —DeVries *loves* women in their variousness—but these are dropped threads: a Wellesley lit major who has a summer job as a swillperson (drives a garbage truck) probably is there for the fun of seeing such a one in such a job, and Roxy, an assistant to Chirouble, is in too indeterminate a position to be developed—she's about halfway (ascending) between Toby and Cynthia. One gets used to this sort of smorgasbord of sexual opportunities that DeVries presents in his works, though one wishes he would pare it down a bit (art is supposed to). There is also a motorcycle gang, which at first challenges and then supports Teeters, at one time providing an escort for his outrageous Land Yacht of a car. Teeters promises them work, but can't deliver after he gets into censorship difficulties, and they seem merely to float off.

Teeters courts Cynthia's mother, a representative of old-fashioned values, convincing her he's true blue (her phrase). She wants grandchildren, which her step-daughter Cynthia does not plan to give her. For a time the mother seems likely to adopt Eddie. But DeVries pairs her off with another old geezer with soda fountain values, and she's taken care of. Thus we have the oddity of an author presenting characters younger than himself as exemplars of virtues much older than those of his narrator. It doesn't seem right.

Toby is the one who pairs with Teeters, finally, showing that *Noon's* opening line is right, that "the trouble with treating people as equals is that the first thing you know they may be doing the same thing to you." Cynthia, who had manipulated Teeters to climax while they watched him (she ignorantly) act or perform in one of his own films, marries Chirouble. It seems Teeters does the close-ups himself, from the neck down, at least, leading up to, as he calls it, *la mort douche*. Toby recognizes him by a mole he has, and Cynthia finds out; neither cares.

Ought they? Ought anyone? A California court recently convicted a porn-film producer on the basis of that state's anti-pimp law: the court ruled that anyone who hired women to perform sexually was a pimp—and his employees prostitutes. At Teeters' trial, DeVries has the defense refer obliquely to *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, then goes on to contradictory experts who cancel each other out on the artistic merit of sexucational films. The real question for DeVries seems to be whether it would seduce susceptible personalities, but the asinine pregnant teenager (who says *kwee* for *could we*) who testifies cannot be taken seriously.

The part about the expert witnesses I believe: in the case where I testified, a social worker and a sociologist/sex therapist said the films in question were innocuous films (they were the sort usually advertised as XXX Rated), in which the people involved were merely being "friendly." My counter was that literature ordinarily has two- and three-dimensional characters, flat ones and round ones (cf. E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*), those who are not integral to the story and those whose personalities are developed fully. In pornography, the characters are not even flat, not even two-dimensional: they are one-dimensional. Pornography treats people, especially women, as Things. This seemed to convince the jury, though the $15,000 fine was of no consequence. These films are produced by organizations that, as Meyer Wolfsheim says in *Gatsby*, have "gonnegtions."

Not so in *The Prick of Noon*: Eddie Teeters apparently has no underworld gonnegtions and is broken financially by his suspended sentence. Teeters has to drive his Land Yacht for hire, but he's happy being married to Toby, who is pregnant—see, pornographers are normal after all, yearn for a regular life—and he's trying to place a script of his own. At the close, he's having a hard time raising the money, though he has faith he can do it.

Which, of course, is the heart of the whole thing: in a Marketplace Economy, that which can be sold will be sold, and that which can't be won't be. Probably that's better than a Planned (Censoring) Society, but DeVries doesn't address this issue directly, no more than he explores the infrastructure of pornography. Nor does he ask what its actors are like: his star is named Mea Culpa, a woman who thinks it's like Mia Farrow's name. We never get to know Mea, for she remains a flat character. On screen, I'll

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bet she was one-dimensional.

At the trial in which I participated, the defense was more polished and much better paid than the prosecution, and it was a challenge matching wits with him. I did it, incidentally, in part *to* match wits, to have that experience, and because no one from Social Sciences would do it, though it was to them that the County Prosecutor, one of their graduates, originally appealed. They *did* agree to see the flicks, requisite to qualifying to testify one way or another. They all declined to witness, though, in general, on grounds that if "that's what people want to pay their money for. . . . " All of them were liberals. It was fun to see them for once favor the Marketplace. cc

The Costs of Culture *by M.E. Bradford*

"The choice of a point of view is the initial act of culture."

—Ortega y Gasset

Stephen Miller: *Excellence & Equity: The National Endowment for the Humanities*; University Press of Kentucky; Lexington.

***A Report to the Congress of the United States on the State of the Humanities*; The American Council of Learned Societies; New York.**

Because I have spoken sharply to the general question of Federal support for arts and letters, and because my name is connected with certain facets of the public business, I receive through the mails a mass of publications designed to justify past or projected government funding for cultural activities. Some of these enterprises come under the heading of international relations or educational exchanges and are administered by the United States Information Agency. Others are within the Department of Education, such as language programs and area studies. And there are many more—within the Library of Congress, the Archives, the Smithsonian Institution, the great museums, and elsewhere. They all have industrious and eloquent defenders. But with respect to politics and the intellectual atmosphere in these United States, the most important of these writings concern the National Endowment for the Humanities—that now-20-year-old agency of the government brought into being to foster humane letters and the distribution of such learning or wisdom as proceeds from reflection or research in those fields that make up what we conventionally call "the humanities": in such studies as are occupied with men and manners, language, persuasion, conceptual truth, aesthetics, the formation of character, and historical explanation.

Generally speaking, the promotional literature I see minimizes the history of whatever has been tendentious or merely partisan in the administration of this agency's now more than $140 million budget and emphasizes instead the utility and potential of the Endowment as a civilizing instrument operating within an area of the nation's intellectual life that is still more than 90 percent dependent on private resources. In the pages of this literature there is much "uplift," puff, and burble, all of it officially oblivious to the fact that no public body can be expected to agree on what constitutes appropriate support for the humanities. But sometimes (and more wisely) these apologies and appeals speak not of fond hope but of the political problems surrounding NEH in its relation to the Congress and the groups which make up its constituency, the conflicts between such powers and the difficulty of satisfying them all. It is these documents which interest me, for they raise questions about the character of a regime which has such difficulty in calculating the costs of a commitment to culture and in determining the essential nature of the humanities as it relates to unavoidably political considerations.

Two works in this last category, which I have examined recently, are the 1985 *A Report to the Congress of the United States on the State of the Humanities*, issued by The American Council of Learned Societies, and Stephen Miller's *Excellence & Equity: The National Endowment for the Humanities*, a monograph of institutional history and functional analysis prepared with the support of the Twentieth Century Fund.

The ACLS *Report* offers a way into the narrative, which Miller provides, and a justification for the caution of his suggestions for reforming NEH. The purpose of the ACLS statement is to encourage reauthorization of the Endowment and to control what sustained funding will mean for the member organizations which make up the Council: to get their view of NEH written into law by a Congress thus far reluctant to be specific with its instructions. Appearing in its several chapters, each of which represents a particular learned society, is also much talk about depoliticizing the Endowment —*sententiae* contra the Reagan regime provided by such "nonpartisan" authorities as are prepared to impose their own version of political activism upon it through the use of academic "experts"; *sententiae* presupposing (in the face of the last two Presidential elections) some version of Rousseau's obnoxious doctrine of the "General Will"—what we would want NEH to be if we understood matters so well as the savants for whom ACLS has spoken.

A sample of this collective presumption appears in the chapter speaking for the Modern Language Association of America: "The NEH should maintain and if possible expand all of its programs." Elsewhere in the *Report*, the American Studies Association complains of NEH's retreat from "a sense of social purpose and idealism" toward support for the "more conven-

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tional, least controversial kinds of scholarly research." We can very well imagine what kind of work, as opposed to the "conventional," that "social purpose and idealism" might engender. Yet we should not be surprised by such blatant mendacity and open arrogance. Instead, having converted the interests of learning into just another lobby, we should react in astonishment only when some scholarly organizations refuse to "play ball" and argue to the contrary (as did this year the Renaissance Society of America) that "the NEH should continue to avoid investing its resources in projects and activities that claim to belong to the humanities because of popular confusion or interested distortion but which in fact belong to the arts, to the social sciences, or to social and political activities."

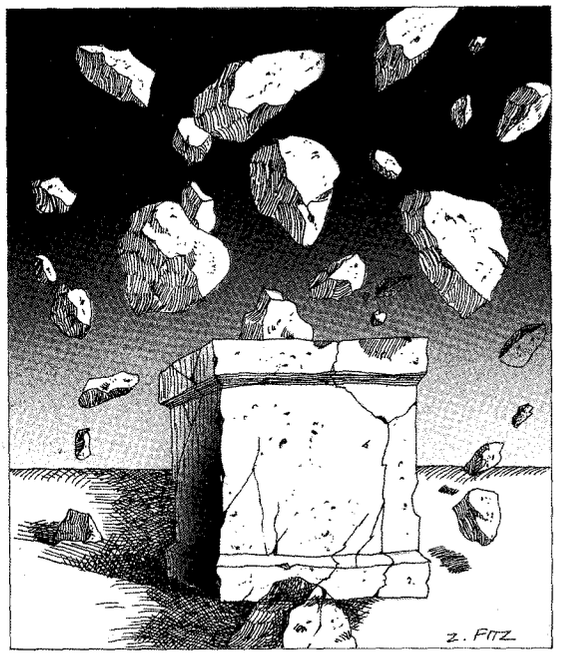
Such, of course, are the implications of Miller's history and analysis but—because he is a Washington "insider," a career public servant and unaware of the meaning of elections—not the points that he makes. Even so, his book is indispensable as an introduction to its subject and as an account of the 1965 rhetorical origins of NEH.

As I have argued elsewhere, it is very important that the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts not become a "ministry of culture" in the European sense. For if they had such power, they would soon face a considerable pressure to create and enforce a *national* cultural policy. Literary scholars hear already about an "official" revision of the literary canon in a more "pluralist" direction and historians of a history curriculum free of "bias" toward Western values. However, for the moment, the danger of modernist cultural totalitarianism has abated. Miller suggests moving all NEH activities connected with "cultural dissemination" into a new and expanded version of NEA and insulating from White House influence the process by which the NEH chairman is selected. This, he argues, might end the suspicion of partisanship which hangs like a "cloud" over the agency and the old debate of elitism v. populism among the friends and critics of the Endowment. To which we respond, "Not unless the absolutely political character of the American academy is radically and mysteriously transformed."

To be sure, NEH programs of obvious topicality and partisan inspiration—the sort of activities sanctioned by Jimmy Carter's cultural czar, Dr. Joe Duffy, at his worst—should be (and have been) discontinued: grants to unions, to protest and special interest groups—to women *because* they were women and to minorities *because of* their race or preference in language. But to take away appointive control of NEH from the President of the United States would be merely to turn that organization over to management by the left on a more regular and restrictive basis. Even the administrators chosen by some ostensibly nonpartisan body would emphasize credentials in selecting chairmen to govern the agency; and conservatives would, by definition (having been out of power for 50 years), lack the credentials; which is what anyone who has worked since 1981 in the branches of government concerned with cultural affairs could predict without hesitation.

In *Excellence & Equity* we read that the authors of the March 11, 1965, "Act to create a National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities" argued for their legislation that it was needed to correct an imbalance in the nation's intellectual life brought on by the Federal power's "limiting preoccupation with science." The bill, in other words, avoided a direct appeal to a theory of cultural Federalism, a doctrine of the essential obligations of government to foster arts and letters, and spoke instead of circumstantial reasons for at least "some" Federal funding of high culture and humane learning, a modest foil to the National Science Foundation.

Even the most intemperate advocates of cultural spending are reluctant to suggest that a major attempt to revise the standing prologue to this original authorizing bill, a new "Declaration of Purpose," be attempted in conjunction with the necessary legislative recommitment to NEH. They are well advised to be careful in tampering with language which both satisfies the Congress and leaves the Endowment free to function *primarily* as a nucleus around which a pattern of private support has gathered—to be, despite confused efforts at levering upward levels of public taste and sensibility, most of what it should be, or all that it can be, given the nature of the regime. For larger ambitions would lead not to the fulfillment of NEH's highest potential for service to arts and letters, but rather, following protracted political debate, to its destruction.



Our political guardians, despite their myopic inability to recognize that the cultural Endowments *should* serve the general population *by serving culture per se*—that they should expect representatives of the party in power to follow that order of priorities in administering an agency and to win political credit through stewardship of a common good—are not (contra Miller) mistaken in their refusal to imitate the French or British pattern of government support for cultural activities. On questions of taste and value, as on questions concerning the *telos* or purpose of our political order, Americans have never been a people well agreed—homogenous underneath the wide variety of our cultural disputing, as are the intellectual *aristoi* of those older societies. Hence, we will not tolerate artificial instruments for encouraging or pretending to such unity where it has not occurred; nor, in my opinion, should we. Though it serves a purpose, especially in promoting study of the American things, we have in place all of the National Endowment for the Humanities that we can abide. cc

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All Gone in Search of America

(continued from page 5)

schools and colleges, and workers, managers, or owners at a place of business. If (as the song goes) we've "all gone to look for America," we should be looking in homes, churches, and town halls instead of writing propaganda about an abstract country that has never existed and, *deo volente*, never will.

What does that mean, in practical terms? For one thing, it means taking a second look at our history and recovering a sense of reverence for the myths and heroes that bind us together in a nation. It means recognizing that there is a core of America that is thoroughly British—language, literature, values—that we cannot give up without giving up ourselves. It is the one heart for which there is no transplant possible. But there is also another layer—a sort of common European inheritance through which we have broadened and reinterpreted the original identity and further—a general sense in which we are heirs of that Western civilization handed to us by Greeks and Romans. Beyond this point, even with all the goodwill in the world, it is difficult to go. Refugees from other civilizations —Asian, Aztec, African—will either learn to become naturalized Westerners or condemn themselves to remaining alien bodies in the American bloodstream.

This brings us back to the English Language Amendment. In one sense, the amendment is only the latest effort to impose a standard identity. However, it is not entirely unjustified. It has been government—state and Federal —which has attempted to impose bilingualism and biculturalism on the entire United States. In principle, Latin American immigrants are no different from any others. However, our long and virtually open border with Mexico has meant an influx of illegal immigrants in such vast numbers that they threaten to overwhelm the residual American culture of the Southwest.

It is not the numbers alone that create a danger. Latin Americans are the first immigrant people who can go home at any time to renew their ties with the old country. What is worse, the history of bad feelings between gringos and "Hispanics" goes back at least to the Alamo and the Mexican War. If something is not done to close the border and maintain the preeminence of English in the Southwest, there is a perfect scenario for a massive Hispanic irredentist movement, which would see Mexico—not the U.S.—as the Fatherland.

But a sense of national unity will depend on more than the English language—or, for that matter, hamburger chains, TV shows, and pride in Pete Rose. The hardest part is religion. What unity can there be among Catholics and Protestants, Mormons and Buddhists, Jews and Moslems, believers and atheists? It is small wonder that many Americans have fallen back on the idea of a secular consensus. But driving religion out of the public schools and town squares will accomplish nothing, except the further deterioration of the national identity. No society has ever held together out of mere self-interest or the agreement to disagree.

The great religious struggles of the past were not so much about doctrine as they were about nationality. Could a Christian be a good Roman? Could a Catholic be an Englishman, a Protestant a Frenchman? The quarrels within Christendom may seem silly from a distance, but both the persecutors and persecuted recognized something we might like to forget: that human beings define their communities in reference to a power that lies beyond their experience.

It is not just the ancient children of Israel or the Athenians (Athena's people). Even an atheist acquainted with the tenacity of modern Israelis or the stability of the Mormon church will concede some truth to T.S. Eliot's declaration that there is "no community not lived in praise of God." But how are we to praise Him—in what tongue, with what formula? Ecumenical leaders might content themselves with Aeschylus' invocation:

> Zeus, whosoever he is; if by this name he likes to be called. . . .

But a generalized civil religion is almost worse than institutionalized "humanism."

Historically, we have considered ourselves a Christian people. Even our "deists" and skeptics—like Jefferson and Lincoln—have inevitably expressed their deepest convictions in a Christian language. It is still possible—and desirable—for us to recover a sense of that "mere Christianity" that we experienced at school and on public occasions. Many Jews and Moslems are uncomfortable with the idea of a Christian nation, but what is the alternative? As Irving Kristol has pointed out so forcefully, the great persecutors of Jews in this century have not been Christians, but quite the opposite. When a formerly religious people turns away from their God and creates a total and transcendent state, it is then they set out to destroy all vestiges of an alien faith as impediments to unity. If the United States ever does turn to persecution, it will be because its people have abandoned their religion and, like the Communists and Nazis, have made an idol out of the state.

—Thomas Fleming

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in
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1985

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Eugène Ionesco
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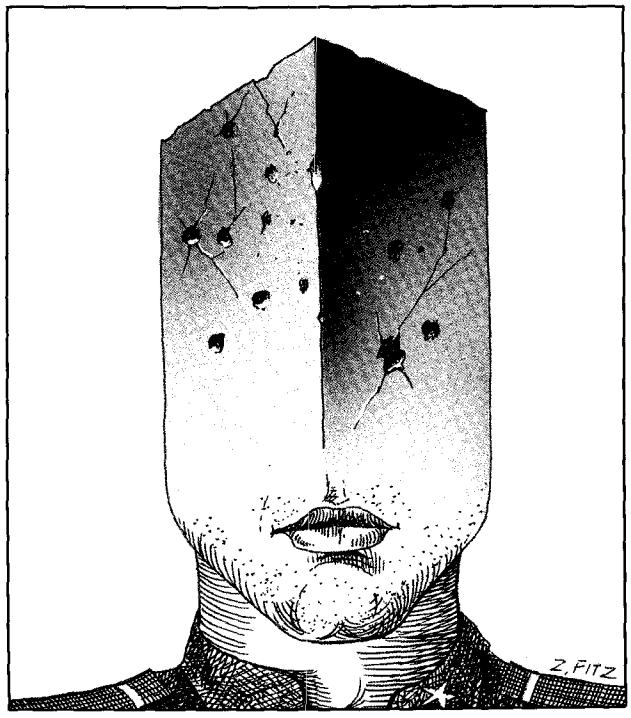
STILL IN SAIGON—IN MY MIND

by E. Christian Kopff

"The earth outside is covered with snow and I am covered with sweat. My younger brother calls me a killer and my daddy calls me a vet." So the Vietnam veteran appears in a popular song recorded a few years back by Charlie Daniels (written by Dan Daley). The Vietnam War is over, but the matter is not settled in my mind, and more importantly, in the imagination of the American people. Officially, the consensus on the war is nearly complete. "Everybody knows or else should know" what editorial writers and college professors tell their more or less captive audiences: the evil of the war, the careless blundering of the



Washington technocratic elite, the glorious victory of the Vietnamese people as the justice of their cause was presented on television to the American people. Yet in the rag and bone shop of the heart that provides the themes for popular art and entertainment, questions echo and re-echo that editorial writers do not address: How could such a strong and wealthy nation lose a war to a small and weak one? What happened to us in those days? What happened to our soldiers, the ones who hurried back and the POW's who came later and the MIA's who never came back?

The Received Version of the War is a *Märchen*, Jack the Giant Killer or David and Goliath, with the pleasingly simple folkloristic motifs of brave young warrior defeating his bulky, conceited, but vulnerable foe. In this case the giant's fall not only restores the promised land to the people, it is one of many steps on the way to the establishment of the true Messianic kingdom over the entire earth. Despite its folkloristic roots, no popular art has been built on the foundation. This is a fairy tale published in editorial pages and college poli. sci. courses and on Public Television.

Whittaker Chambers was able to discern little sense of tragedy in the American people. As a criticism of the intellectuals among whom he spent his younger days, the insight hits the mark. If the state was a tree for the Romantic poet, for the 20th century intellectual history is a train, subject to delays and strange detours, no doubt, but moving steadily towards one far-off secular event. In this inevitable, mechanical progress, there may be backsliders and there will be martyrs, those who die for the cause. But the rightness of the cause and the inevitability of its triumphs are assured.

The American people live in a different sort of fairy tale—the world of Vergil's Aeneas. Aeneas loves his home, Troy, and fights to prevent its fall to the brilliant and tricky and ruthless. He moves into the future and Italy, losing wife and home, to win a new home for his people where, at least for a little while, they can be safe to build and grow again, until they must once more defend themselves against violence and trickery in themselves and from the outside. He can never console himself that the losses are not real losses but so many Lenin-esque eggs broken for the glorious omelette of the future. *Italiam non sponte sequor.* I am not going to Italy because I want to, he tells Dido. The deaths of brave young men represent real and irreparable gaps in the new state Aeneas is founding.

The modern intellectual is, like Hazlitt's Iago, a tragic poet in real life, who cannot feel the desolation in the departure of each individual sacrificed for a future that is and must remain an abstraction. America's commitment to Protestantism and individualism has many negative sides, but it does make loss and sacrifice real. Whether he knows it or not, the typical American has had his mind formed on the hero who feels the loss and yet goes on to create. He is Aeneas, and he stands opposed to the martyr of the inevitable future, Ché Guevara, say, or Martin Luther King.

Around Vietnam the American popular imagination has played with themes that involve real loss and real sacrifice. It began early. At the height of the war, John Wayne

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decided to make a movie modeled on the conventional epics that flowed out of Hollywood during the Second World War. *The Green Berets* is not a typical World War II propaganda film, however. True, there is an enemy in Southeast Asia who is easily assimilable to the cold, barbarous Jap who was a staple of the older films. There is also an enemy at home. He is no second generation German, compromised into collaboration by a youthful indiscretion with the German-American Bund. He is a newspaper reporter (David Janssen), and he sneers at the good, blunt Sergeant trying to explain political realities. He is honest, though, and he accepts Wayne's invitation to see what Vietnam is really like.

In World War II the refugees huddle in Casablanca, waiting for the chance to go home. In Vietnam, the farmers and hill people defend their own homes, and then in the night the Cong come to slay their leaders and teachers and parents. We see an orphaned Vietnamese boy who loses first his family, then the honest South Vietnamese officer who tries to protect him, and finally, unexpectedly but with seeming inevitability, the young American officer who has taken him under his wing. Played by Jim Hutton, the officer is returning from a mission in which a young Vietnamese girl has sacrificed her virtue to trap a North Vietnamese general when he is caught in a trap and swung horribly into a grill of pungie sticks. The boy waits vainly for his new father to emerge from the landing helicopters. Then he and John Wayne walk off together along the beach. "After all, you're what this war is all about." One reporter converted, one general captured, but the best are slain, and there is little hope that the horror of emptiness will ever be erased from the young soul who has looked into that abyss.

The Green Berets was to prove prophetic in its themes, but it had little influence on the many antiwar movies of the 70's. The question was not what was the war like—the evening television news was answering that question graphically. What, rather, was happening to the men who were serving in Vietnam. Jane Fonda's *Coming Home* set a pattern. On the one side we see Bruce Dern, ruined by the war as man and husband; on the other, the compassionate paraplegic, Jon Voigt, driven by the war not into despair but into the conviction that no war is worth dying or killing for. He is even made a more satisfying lover by his antiwar conversion, and he converts college students and Miss Fonda, not by a rugged John Wayne trip to Vietnam, but by the power of his tongue.

At the end of the decade, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, confused as it was by the director's change from antiwar partisan to admirer of Nietzsche and power, still concentrated on the wildness, the craziness of the war. Martin Sheen is sent on a bizarre literary mission to assassinate a renegade U.S. officer, who is also Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness." Kurtz is Marlon Brando, stewing in an Orson Welles-like obesity, worshiping power and death. Sheen himself is haunted and broken by the bloodthirsty climax of his successful mission. Competence has become as crazy as Brando's berserker death camp. (Earlier in the movie we see Robert Duvall as a cavalry officer ordering a helicopter raid on a coastal village so that his new recruit from California can surf.) Duvall's bravery in the midst of the whistling and exploding bombs is impressive, but we feel that it is an insane bravado.

The original filming of the scene included Duvall manifesting compassion as well as war-lust, when he dashes through the shelling to rescue a deserted baby. Coppola cut the scene, to Duvall's publicly expressed disgust. Compassion would have spoiled the one dimensional power-worship that now dominated Coppola's weird version. The public was told that the effect of serving in Vietnam was to make the soldier a dangerous nut. On TV, the stock villain, the greedy businessman, was being replaced by the outwardly normal and patriotic soldier who was inside an uncontrollable killer, broken by his participation in a criminal war.

While TV scriptwriters and movie reviewers applauded one vision of the Vietnam vet, the popular imagination was fostering another. Few serious reviewers noted *Rolling Thunder*, starring William Devane as a POW returned to a hometown no longer his. His wife is bra-less ("No one wears them any more") and wants a divorce to remarry. Attractive young women are his for the asking. Then hoodlums break into his house and brutalize him, although they cannot break him. He has, after all, been tortured by the best, the Vietnamese Communists. They do get to his wife and son and after robbing them, shoot them. Devane loses his family not to divorce and the new morality, but to violence.

When he recovers, he goes hunting with a fellow POW. His lover discovers that he wants revenge more than sex and cries out, "Why do I always get stuck with the crazy men?" His answer is, "That's the only kind left." The final debacle, the annihilation of a Chicano whorehouse where his attackers are reveling, leaves no doubt of his disgust at the sexual revolution and the new open society of the 60's. Some have seen in *Rolling Thunder* another movie about a Vietnam vet who turns into a psychotic killer, but this, surely, is to miss the gravamen of the movie's charges against America. Those who bore the brunt of fighting and suffering return to find the country they fought for gone. It did not desert them technically. Nixon and Kissinger got them out, all right. But it is no longer their country. The way of life they fought to defend is gone.

Violence and selfishness and sex have created a new way of life. Many Vietnam movies are concerned about betrayal by the leadership, the government. The American people are all right, but they need to hear the facts that were kept from them. In *Rolling Thunder* it is the ordinary Texans who have sold out, betrayed what the vets fought for. The melting pot of America is a whorehouse and the heroes limp off, embracing, at the successful completion of their mission, the destruction of that whorehouse and its violent, degenerate inhabitants.

There are two angers in Vietnam movies. One, more easily assuaged, is anger against THEM, the ones who sold us out, whether in fighting a criminal war or in not letting us win it. At the heart of *Rolling Thunder*, however, boils the deeper resentment against the people who used the years of the war to betray, to let slip from their hands in some cases, the ideals for which the soldiers fought. This resentment surfaced again in a spectacular fashion in Sylvester Stallone's surprise hit, *First Blood*. Stallone's Rambo is a

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Special Forces veteran, but he looks like a hippie or a biker. The small Oregon town where he gets into trouble with the law treats him first with contempt and then hunts him down like an animal. When he turns on his tormentors, he wreaks a horrible revenge.

The fury of his actions is awesome, but no more so than the rage of his final tirade to commanding officer Richard Crenna: "Who are they to protest me?" This wrath is not directed particularly against the elite. It is a small town in rural America that is blown away in Sly Stallone's vision. The rot in America is deep, and no superficial balm will quiet the throbbing cancer. The financial success of the movie was a surprise, but reviewers gave conventionally negative responses and chose to ignore the meaning of its popularity. They did not pause to ask themselves the question: Why would people, especially younger people, pay money to see such a picture when they stayed away in droves from such artistic successes as Costa-Gavras' *Missing*.

The overwhelming financial success this past summer of *Rambo: First Blood II* awoke many, news commentators and editorial writers as well as reviewers, from their dogmatic slumbers. When I saw the movie on Memorial Day, every teenager in the audience got up at the end and applauded. The older viewers looked on in impotent amazement. *Rambo,* however, is a rather different movie, in tone and themes, from *First Blood,* and the difference is due to another and very different movie, also a sleeper.

Gene Hackman starred in *Uncommon Valor,* and that billing alone attracted notice. An aging officer whose son never returned from the war, he is convinced that his son is still alive there, held as a slave by the Vietnamese. No official will listen, so he rounds up a group of Vietnamese vets, many of them bizarre misfits, made that way by their wartime experience, and rescues his son and other POW's and MIA's. The movie is moving, sensitive, far from abrasive, and the industry was caught by surprise at the audiences it attracted.

The success of *Uncommon Valor* did not escape the attention of Chuck Norris, a karate champ who had parlayed the early death of Bruce Lee into some money-making karate movies. Norris saw himself as the true successor to John Wayne and seized the chance to succeed where Wayne had failed. His *Missing in Action* was a blockbuster. Norris played a POW who had escaped from an illegal Vietnamese prison camp and had now returned with an official U.S. delegation to uncover what the Communists had been doing. There are some effective verbal confrontations, much action, some revenge, and a finale in which he breaks up a self-righteous Vietnamese media event by crashing in with a number of rescued POW's. Norris followed up *MIA* with another film on how

REVISIONS

Restoring Order

Imagine a civilization in collapse. Waves of barbarians flooding the frontiers, rampant inflation and a devalued currency, a series of administrations that do not last long enough to implement their reform proposals, an inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy, rapacious and unfair tax collections, the armed forces rebellious and in disarray, an almost complete collapse of faith in the national ideals. It is not the United States in 1979, but the Roman Empire at the end of the third century A.D. To many Romans, who turned increasingly to the refuge offered by religion, it seemed that "the long glories of ancient Rome" were about to end when, quite unexpectedly, Diocles, a competent (although not brilliant) soldier of Illyrian peasant stock, took the pieces of the empire and reassembled them into a new structure. Like all Roman revolutions, it was called a restoration.

In a new biography (*Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*; Methuen; London and New York), Stephen Williams traces the remarkable career of the ancient Franco, who lengthened his name to Diocletian after a successful coup (in 284) that put him on the throne of the Caesars—the 27th emperor since the death of Septimus Severus in 211. The new emperor proceeded to reestablish the empire on the model of the only social institution he was familiar with: the army. He reorganized the bureaucracy along military lines but took away from the army most of its old civilian responsibilities—like tax collection. His successful rehabilitation of the imperial revenue collection grew out of his recognition that the old system was a failure. He based the new order on the needs of the army. Throughout the third century, provisioning had been a haphazard affair, which came down to the soldiers taking whatever they needed. Under the new system, every estate in the Roman world—rich and poor—was assessed on the basis of number of persons and number of iugera (5/8 acre), in which all forms of wealth could be expressed—at least theoretically.

Diocletian, to his credit, recognized that so vast a bureaucratic empire could not be governed by one man. His solution was obvious, although risky: a system of two senior emperors (Augusti) each with a junior colleague (a Caesar). He then merged the old provincial administrative structure into manageable dioceses divided into smaller provinces—an arrangement that lived on in the church long after the Western empire had collapsed.

In only 10 years, the energetic ruler and his colleagues managed to give the Persians their biggest thrashing since Alexander the Great, to restore Roman Britain—which had grown independent during the time of troubles—to the empire, improve the currency, and restore the badly shaken confidence of the Roman world. The signs of his efforts are still apparent all over Europe: massive fortifications and grandiose churches like his famous palace in Split. What all the monuments of the period convey is a new

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his hero had escaped.

This was the context in which Stallone did his own *MIA*. Rambo is freed from the prison where he was sent after *First Blood* to go into Vietnam to examine a carefully chosen empty POW camp. Our bureaucrats, who had arranged this charade, fouled up. The camp was not empty, and Rambo actually gets a soldier to the rendezvous point, whereupon the bureaucrat declares the mission aborted and leaves Rambo and the rescued prisoner stranded. Tortured and alone, Rambo escapes and brings our men back, in the process killing an estimated 75 Vietnamese and Russians. Oh yes, Russians, too. The audience is left in no doubt about who is running the show in Southeast Asia.

Rambo is a good-hearted movie, after all, with all kinds of fantastic slayings and shootings and just a little romantic sadness. A nice Vietnamese girl who helps Rambo is killed. At the end, when Crenna asks Rambo not to hate his country, Rambo shrieks that he loves America, he would die for her, but he would like to see the affection returned. He stalks off, having frustrated the bureaucrats and freed our men. In *Rambo*, Stallone has taken the hard-hitting motifs of earlier Vietnam movies and made them palatable for a mass audience. The American people are not to blame. Bureaucrats did us in. Given a chance, our men can stand up to torture and beat Charlie and his Russian master. For all its violence and movement, *Rambo* is ultimately a consoling film.

It did not console the media powers that be, of course. They have been picturing us as recovering from the brutality and learning the lessons of Vietnam. The American people had been lied to, but they were learning their limitations and were wiser now. Suddenly appeared this overwhelming proof that the brats had not learned their lesson, that they were not even studying seriously. Here was an America unwilling to pay money to see Costa-Gavras' picture of American duplicity in Chile, despite the attraction of stars like Sissy Spacek and Jack Lemmon, but eager to flood theaters when the enemy in the last war was portrayed as a sadistic torturer defeatable by resolution and intelligence. For crying out loud, hadn't they seen the PBS Vietnam series?

It would be wrong to pass over the more complex figure of Michael Cimino. Cimino has many contacts with the more popular aspects of the film trade and has worked with Clint Eastwood, but he is committed to making artistic or "quality" films. In *The Deerhunter*, he focused on the healthiness of ethnic, working-class America, shaken, tortured, and, in some cases, tragically broken by the Vietnam War. The war is seen as a kind of national suicide, and the theme of Russian roulette appears several times in the movie to underline this insight, from the gambling halls of Saigon to the POW camps of the North Vietnamese. The

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hierarchical concept of the world. The emperors—sometimes interchangeable in appearance—are shown oversized and dominating their stiffly regimented subjects—soldiers and civilians alike. It was a new world, one that was to last until the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Diocletian suffered two major setbacks. Only two forces resisted his command: the marketplace and the Christian Church. For all his efforts to stabilize the economy, prices kept on rising dramatically. Like many a ruler after him, Diocletian blamed inflation on the villainy of businessmen rather than on his own high spending and degraded coinage. In 301 he issued his famous edict on wage and price controls, which fixed the price for everything from Egyptian beer (two *denarii*) to legal fees for pleading a case (1,000). It worked even less well than Mr. Nixon's efforts along the same lines. Inflation was not really licked until Constantine effectively put the empire on the gold standard of the Solidus.

If the invisible hand of the marketplace could not be coerced, the Holy Spirit proved even more recalcitrant. Previous emperors had unsuccessfully tried to persecute Christians into conformity, but the persecutions under Diocletian and Caesar Galerius were more "thorough," more relentless than anything dreamed of by Nero or Decius. The combined effect of his four edicts made it a capital crime

to be a Christian. The Caesar Constantius (father of Constantine, who "converted" the empire) was lax in carrying out all but the mildest provisions. The edicts were strenuously enforced in the East, where the clergy were arrested, tortured, and executed; scriptures were seized, churches burned, and thousands of ordinary Christians were martyred. Some Christians recanted, others equivocated. But on the whole, the church held firm and attracted the sympathy and admiration of many decent pagans.

Diocletian was not a monster or even particularly brutal. His weakness was simply the other side of his strength: his military vision of a committed society. In this lucid and well-written biography, Williams suggests that Diocletian may have been inspired by the "Oriental despotism" and command economy he had witnessed in Egypt. If so, Egypt probably only served to reinforce the lessons he had learned in the army. Like most Machiavellian rulers, Diocletian succeeded in doing a great deal of good, but in the end he succumbed to his own theories. What must he have thought of the civil wars that broke out among his successors, after he retired (the first real emperor who could take the chance) to grow cabbages? What he certainly could not guess was that a young man he had excluded from the succession, Constantine, should emerge victor and establish the most successful, longest-lasting Christian civilization the world has ever known. cc

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American Way of Life is, through it all, presented as a positive good—working, loving, and hunting. At the end, the remnants of the cast gather to sing "God Bless America." (Compare here the more somber and understated ending of *The Green Berets.*)

The defense of the American Way of Life against the enemy from the East is also the theme of Cimino's latest offering, *The Year of the Dragon*, in which Mickey Rourke plays a graying Vietnam veteran out to destroy a Chinatown drug lord with close and explicit ties to the drug traffic in Southeast Asia. Few reviewers missed the movie's direction, and they were as angry at it as they were at *Rambo.* The point is made again and again by Rourke himself and his closest friend that he is obsessed with the defeat in Vietnam, a defeat caused by cowardly and self-protecting bureaucrats. This time he is going to win, he says, almost in the very words of Stallone to Crenna at the start of *Rambo.*

Rambo's crusade kills many Communists but does not involve serious loss to America. Even the treacherous bureaucrat survives. Rourke's victory, on the other hand, is costly, almost Vergilian. The bravest and truest of those around Rourke suffer: a brave young Chinese policeman, Rourke's wife, both brutally slain; finally, even the beautiful Chinese-American TV reporter that he has lured into the investigation (and into bed) is brutally raped. Cruelty and viciousness cannot deter Rourke. Now, this is a fantasy, as much as *Rambo,* but it represents a much more mature fantasy. Virtue will triumph, but we are not allowed to shirk the cost of that victory. As in Vergil's *Aeneid,* a better society will emerge from the conflict, but the cost in human suffering and loss is real, and we must face it. In a world where easy and cheap success is promised from every TV screen and full-page ad in magazines, this insistence on the cost of victory is as needed by Americans as much as the enthusiasm and patriotism of Chuck Norris and Sly Stallone.

Movies are fantasies. A nation's fantasies are also statements about itself. The fantasies of a few filmmakers, rewarded with devotion and money, have now seeped down into the television industry. In Stephen J. Cannell's lighthearted *Riptide,* serving together in Vietnam is a shorthand for masculine loyalty and achievement. On the much abused A-*Team,* it is somewhat more. The A-*Team* is a group of 20th-century Robin Hoods, helping the downtrodden against the wealthy and the brutal. Why are they on the lam from the U.S. government? You have to listen carefully, but the reason is, in a word, because they invaded North Vietnam without (or is it against?) orders. The invasion of the North is the great hidden, unspoken American fantasy. We could have won the war if they had let us—the thematic thread that unites most of the movies we have discussed. Its role in the success of the A-*Team*'s appeal to the American psyche is important, and TV critics would rather talk about anything else.

More explicit and often impressive is the role of Vietnam in Glen Larsen's *Magnum, P.I.*, where Tom Selleck and his friends are Vietnam vets who have never really recovered from that experience. The three American buddies are successes in their way, and they love one another and are loyal to one another, but their careers and personal lives are stunted by the war, its disorienting horror touching them when they least expect it. In one episode, a Vietnam medic has devoted his life to caring for the family of a friend who was killed in the war (by drug dealers, not by Charlie). His friend's wife has grown to love him, and so does his son. He, however, is committed to revenge and in the end assassinates the drug dealer at the cost of his own life. Selleck finds it hard to explain to the now doubly widowed widow why she had to lose two men she loved. "You see, we shut our eyes and we forget. He shuts his eyes and he remembers." This past season Magnum returned with his whole crew to Cambodia to rescue the leader of the democratic resistance from the Vietcong. Here, too, the bravest—a young man, a wife, an old soldier—die, but when the others get back, they all agree that freedom is worth fighting for. They were right to go back.

When did the American people begin to realize that it was us against them? I wonder if the turning point in movies did not occur about the time of *Walking Tall.* Buford Pusser was a tragic hero. They took everything from him, pride and family and wife, but he never gave up until they killed him. Our POW's returned from North Vietnam with a similar lesson, real heroes like Rear Admiral James B. Stockdale and Senator Jeremiah Denton. Courage and ingenuity can triumph over brutality. They can torture us and kill us but they cannot make us give up.

The rational response to the totalitarian torturer and the liberal social engineer is to give up, keep quiet, and do things their way. Out of a deep courage and commitment to their way of life, however, the American people are finding new heroes in the men who went through the frustration and defeat of Vietnam and will not be fitted into *their* mold. For Americans, heroes are where you find them. Surely no other people ever took policemen as their heroes as we did in the 60's and still do. Now we are admiring the battered veterans of a lost war. Some, like Jim Stockdale and Jeremiah Denton, were real soldiers. Many are fantasies of Vietnam warriors. Under their banners, the war continues.

T.S. Eliot thought that we fight for lost causes "because we know that our defeat and dismay may be the preface to our successors' victory." If the films that appeal to the popular imagination are evidence, the war is not over for many Americans. More, they are willing to see abusive portrayals of the leadership that lost the war and brought on so many of the fruits of the 60's. This you will not learn reading "important" magazines or public speeches. The American people have discovered in the darkness of the movie theater and the privacy of their homes what they want to applaud. The security of the voting booth has begun to proclaim the same message. The liberal Bourbons, who have learned nothing and forgotten nothing, are beginning to stir uncomfortably in their couches. The cries for equality and compassion that blare from the loudspeakers are being drowned out by a mob crying for excellence and victory, both personal and national. As yet, only popular art reflects this resurgence, but a satiated and sleeping elite may awaken one morning to discover that their cynical Vietnam misadventure was the harbinger of the great popular revolutions of our time. "Sir," Rambo asks Richard Crenna, "this time, can we win?" cc

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HENRY JAMES AT THE SACRED FOUNT

by Thomas P. McDonnell

It has long been self-evident that Henry James was thoroughly apolitical in any practical sense of the term. He did not involve himself in public affairs as such and hardly took more than passing notice of the Civil War, even though his two younger brothers, Wilkinson and Robertson James, served with distinguished records in the Union Army. Roughly a half century later, as if in mitigation of his previous indifference, Henry suffered most bitterly the effects of the First World War. He was active in Belgian Relief services and in other phases of the Allied Cause. In the year of his last illness, 1915, after some 40 years in England, he became a British subject.

Europe itself had long since become the locus not only of James's consciousness, as realized in the remarkable art of his fiction, but also as formed in his finely tuned conscience as well. And yet, for James, the war was not so much a political as a socially calamitous event. But in the anguish of this event, he sought no political answers as far as the uncertain future was concerned. He never felt compelled to ask the necessary questions of his age; and though a man of no political party (Tory, of course, would have been the most appropriate party label), he was nevertheless a man who, more than anything else, espoused a classic stability of the social order.

In this cultural sense, Henry James was one of the most formidable conservatives of the age. He was, in the waning of one century, the prototypical social conservative and possibly the last of such before the general breakdown, at the beginning of the new century, would manifest itself in the seeming chaos of postwar arts and letters. As a writer whose primary gift was a prodigious amassing of well-ordered words, James's genius projected itself into a mere decade and a half of the new century in such a way as to force us to think of him as a modern novelist.

A sense of human complexity and the superlative style of his middle period were the means by which James would achieve this level of our awareness, especially insofar as a great style always contributes to preserving the integrity of social communication. At his best, he was never merely experimental for its own sake or given to an obsession with special or sometimes bizarre effects. The dominant quality clearly recognized in James by the late Flannery O'Connor was, in sum, his overriding "devotion to form"; and in this regard he was duly acknowledged as the Master by the best—or at least by the most nearly approachable—of his peers.

Still, with all this to the good, there remains an unsatisfied yearning to discover in what other ways James was—or was not—the complete conservative. In short, what was the nature of his conservatism? It seems unlikely that such a highly organized and complex English style, as James certainly had, could have evolved from solely reductive principles. If James had a passion for anything, it was—in his later years especially—for (1) a contrapuntal construct of language and (2) an almost salvific need for manners as a guarantee of privacy against the encroachments of an increasingly restive world. But, as Marion Montgomery points out in his excellent study *Why Hawthorne Was Melancholy* (Sherwood Sugden, 1984), "One does not find James concerned with the mystery upon which Miss O'Connor found manners to depend." This is nothing less than that sacred mystery from which all modes of human behavior, whether as gestures of the moral impulse or as given maxims of conduct, are ultimately derived.

The point of inquiry, quite bluntly, is whether Henry

James had an essentially religious nature; and if so, did it to any appreciable extent influence his writings? To what extent, moreover, did James manage to shed the Swedenborgian influences of Henry James Sr.? In fact, there are all kinds of critical testimonies which would deny him any religious orientation. F.O. Mathiessen contrasted James with Hawthorne, whose "general vision of evil came to him directly from theological tradition." James, on the other hand, was very early on liberated from orthodoxy by his father's insistence on educating his elder sons to "have their ethics cleared from any restrictions of dogma."

Whatever his sympathies, James would never subscribe to a creed. It was T.S. Eliot who said, in one of those utterances which seem to suggest more than they actually say, that James "had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." This is not conservatism, however. It is angelism. It is Emersonian, and James himself knew better than to subscribe to any such notion. For instance, of the three great Concord worthies—Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne—it was, of course, with Hawthorne that James, creatively speaking, had formed a striking and abiding affinity. He acquired from Hawthorne a highly developed moral sense, but still recognized no authoritative

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source from which it derived—other than that which had to do with good taste and especially with a sense of decency as the inviolate tenet of acceptable human behavior.

Yvor Winters dared to carry the implications of this premise a little further by claiming that James's moral consciousness was "the product of generations of discipline in the ethical systems of the Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic Churches, a product which subsisted as a traditional way of feeling and of acting after the ideas which formed it . . . had ceased to be understood or, as ideals, valued." One could almost say the same, in our own time, for that supreme novelist of manners, Evelyn Waugh—though, in his case, the Church, even when perceived to be withering away, was nevertheless valued precisely because of its ideas.

One of the most remarkable statements in contemporary appraisals of Henry James comes from a rather unlikely source—that is, from the Manichaean sensibility of the novelist Graham Greene. Greene wrote four refreshingly keen appreciations of James. One essay was written to refute the notion that the religious sense is singularly absent in James's works. Greene cites letters, travel writings, the novels and shorter fictions as rich in allusions to the curious, if tenuous, hold that Catholic Christianity had on Henry James.

Even this much, however, must not be taken as an aesthetic attraction merely, the comforts of which James could just as readily have found in similar, and perhaps even more refined, manifestations within the Algonquin community. What he sought instead were those certainties of Catholic definition on Hell, Purgatory, supernatural evil, and prayers for the dead, etc., which might more properly inform an art and life sourced largely by now in the ethos of European culture itself. However, as Greene prudently concludes, "It would be wrong to leave the impression that James's religious sense ever brought him nearer than hailing distance to an organized system." James was a novelist and did not have it in him to become a flawed religionist in the bargain. Although in this sense he was a kind of deracinated conservative, Henry James paid his dues to society and to art—to the latter very much in full, of course, and to our everlasting enjoyment. But there remains, in any retrospective reading of the great last novels, a pervasive sense of sadness. It is like the sadness of a waltz that is danced in slow-motion time, to a music almost unheard, and at the end of which the dancers themselves fade into the darkness.

"The truth is God's," says the ancient lady in *The Aspern Papers*, "it isn't man's; we had better leave it alone. Who can judge it—who can say?" (echoing Montaigne's eternal 'Que sais-Je?'). Perhaps this was as far as Henry James dared to go. He could not quite strike roots into that abiding source which continues to animate, however diminishingly, Western civilization. As for his Pilate-like sense of the truth, the saddest prospect of all was that James never fully realized that it may indeed be given to large portions of humanity to know at least something of the truth, and to know that it can be ours. In this regard, too, it is almost heartbreaking to read James's superb letter to Grace Norton on the question of human suffering: "Sorrow comes in great waves," he concludes, "It wears us, uses us, but we wear it and use it in return; and it is blind, whereas we after a manner see." With these biblical intonations of the natural law, James's letter remains a thoroughly Christian statement; but the pity of it is that he would also perceive in his comforting advice to Grace Norton the more demanding "voice of stoicism," as he called it—anything, it seems, than have to admit the Christian connotation.

We have only to hope of James, therefore, as the translator Donald M. Frame has said of Montaigne's early "stoicism," that it was more an admiration than a conviction. Otherwise, the best we can hope for beyond a self-serving form of the conservative impulse is what Hawthorne had earlier recognized as the fidelity of an unchanging heart. James certainly had that much to his credit. But it would be left to Yvor Winters later to discern all too clearly that one of James's major defects was that he had attempted "to understand ethical problems in a pure state." There seems little question of that now.

In the main, it must also be said that James lacked any full—or fulfilling—sense of the human context beyond the periphery of his own privileged experience. This has always been the fatal error of the deracinated conservative. It thus remains one of the more interesting paradoxes of Anglo-American letters that an intelligence as incandescent as Henry James's, present on almost every page he wrote, could have written indeed so knowingly about the phenomenon of human manners without having seen in this complexity the unifying presence of a sacred mystery. In the end, the only sacred fount he knew was the one ensconced in the private garden of his own art and imagination. cc

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—from "The Promise of Life"
by Momcilo Selic

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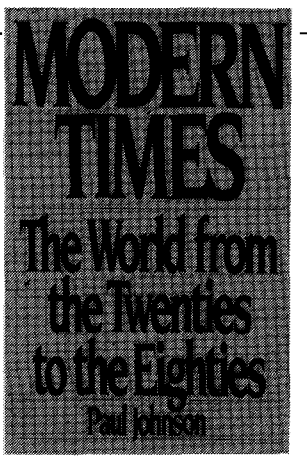

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How do you score on men and events?

Fill in the blanks with the people Paul Johnson is referring to:

"The _____ invasion [of Washington], one visiting statesman observed, was 'like watching the Borgia brothers take over a respectable north Italian town'." (Page 614)

"In the atomic field Soviet agents included Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Morton Sobell, David Greenglass, Harry Gold, _____ (alias Alexander Stevens), to whom Whittaker Chambers acted as courier, and Jacob Golos, as well as Klaus Fuchs, who had been cleared by British security." (Page 458)

"Yet _____ was not a statist. He said he was against any attempt 'to smuggle fascism into America through the back door'. On many issues he was a liberal....He did not make anti-Semitic jokes, like Woodrow Wilson and his wife or Franklin Roosevelt. To a very wide spectrum of educated American opinion, he was the leading American public man..." (Page 243)

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COMMENDABLES

Brezhnev and Beyond

by Michael Warder

Harry Gelman: *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente*; Cornell University Press; Ithaca, NY.

Perhaps it is inevitable that the new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife Raisa (already dubbed the "Bo Derek of the Steppes" in a British press report) will come to the United States. If Secretary Gorbachev does visit, the journalists and commentators who report the visit should be required to read *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente* by Harry Gelman. The book is an insightful analysis of Soviet assumptions and objectives and of the external events which affected the leadership of Soviet government from 1964 through 1983. Mr. Gelman's sober assessment of Soviet political power indicates that Moscow ought not be mistaken for Camelot.

Mr. Gelman, an Assistant National Intelligence Officer for the U.S. government and now an analyst for the Rand Corporation, argues persuasively that the Politburo functions as an isolated oligarchy deeply committed to opportunistic expansion of the Soviet cause and preservation of their own considerable perquisites. He shows detente for what it was—a Soviet attempt to neutralize the U.S. rapprochement with China, gain Western credits and technology, and prevent American deployment of a superior antiballistic missile system. After many Brezhnev rivals had been dropped from the ruling body during the ruthless infighting that put the policy in place, détente still failed to produce the desired credits and technology from the West, partly because of the October War of 1973 and because of the limits the Soviets placed on Jewish migration. Then, too, the post-Vietnam and post-Watergate weakness of the United States created too many openings for Soviet adventurism all over the globe. To preserve détente by ignoring these opportunities would have been simply un-Soviet.

Yuri Andropov was the Soviet leader at the time Mr. Gelman's well-researched study ends. But the Soviet succession procedure is the next best thing to cloning, and Gelman's book remains an excellent guide to Mr. Gorbachev's concerns and limitations. cc

Michael Warder is director of public affairs at The Rockford Institute.

More Than Monkey Business

Peter C. Reynolds: *On the Evolution of Human Behavior: The Argument From Animals to Man*; University of California, Berkeley.

Human beings are alternately ashamed and amused by the spectacle of their closest connections on the *scala naturae*. Behavior that we find unremarkable in dogs and cats—sexual promiscuity or self-abuse—seems grotesque in chimpanzees and baboons. Looking at apes and monkeys in the zoo is a little too much like looking at ourselves in a fun-house mirror. We begin to wonder if the distorted image is the real us.

The idea of comparing the human species with other primates is not an entirely new idea. As Reynolds points out in his tortuously written but valuable study, Lord Monboddo made a stab at it in the late 18th century (and earned the contempt of Dr. Johnson). Actually, the idea is a great deal more ancient than Reynolds suspects. In Aristotle's system of classification, man is put at the top—after the monkeys—and Galen the physician, when he could no longer dissect human corpses, turned to the barbary ape as the next best thing.

What we can learn about human nature—as opposed to anatomy—is another matter. Early studies of apes came to astonishing conclusions about aggression and promiscuity on the basis of limited and artificial experiments. Field studies have proved far more valuable, but even these can be manipulated to supply the correct results. In one school of thought often described as "conservative," primate studies reveal that early man was a violent and aggressive animal that staked out and defended territory against outsiders and within his little band was engaged in a constant struggle to maintain a dominant position in the social hierarchy. In the opposing view, which we may as well call "liberal," early man was nonaggressive—like the chimpanzee, a species supposedly not interested in territory or status. Data can be quoted in support of any version of either hypothesis.

Of course, these extremes are caricatures, but Reynolds—a pronounced "liberal"—puts the case almost that starkly. His own version is that primates employ aggressive behavior sparingly and with restraint within their social group as a means of maintaining cohesion, a position not far removed from that of the arch-conservatives Konrad Lorenz and his disciple Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt. Reynolds' great contribution is the synthesis of an enormous amount of research that tends to show the universality of basic human emotions and facial expressions, as well as a high degree of similarity (continuity?) with lower primates.

Reynolds' most provocative chapter is on the relationship between primate grooming and human wealth. Grooming behavior is not primarily cosmetic or even hygienic in primates. In some species it is "the most frequent kind of social action." Some of it is between maternal care-givers; in other circumstances it takes place between males. Typically, high-status males are appeased and placated by their inferiors. Grooming between the sexes always increases in the mating season. He makes the point that grooming can be successfully solicited and that this pattern of behavior underlies another pattern that is closer to the human: the request for food or other objects. Except for mothers, "adult males are the target for requests by both males and females." Since grooming and food transfer create networks of exchange, the human phenomenon of wealth and economic exchange may well be rooted in precisely such simian patterns of behavior. In this context, the old adage

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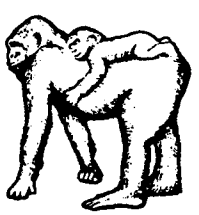
"I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine" takes on the character of natural law.

The implications of such ethological data for economic theory are enormous. In the first place, exchange can be plausibly viewed as an essentially *behavioral* relationship, independent of objects. Secondly, exchange can be interpreted as a much more complex affair than a profit-loss transfer, since grooming and food transfer can be conducted in more than one context; e.g., maternal nurturing of children on the one hand or coercion of inferiors on the other. Still, Reynolds' study may go a long way to support what seemed to be the weakest aspect of George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*: his insistence on making gift-giving and reciprocity the basis for capitalism.

Reynolds' emphasis on continuity leads him to conclude that the human represents merely an "increase of male-female care giving and more exclusive sexual relationships within a social organization similar to a multimale troop," e.g., of chimpanzees. He points out—rather brilliantly—that it is easier to derive human social organization from a multimale troop than from a single-male harem organization (of, for example, the hamadryas baboons used by Fox and Tiger in *The Imperial Animal*), because in a multimale group, "cooperative relationships among unrelated adult males already exist." He therefore rejects the naturalness of the nuclear family in favor of "matrilines and semipromiscuous mating of the multimale troop."



But surely that is not a reasonable conclusion from his own evidence. As Robin Fox pointed out, the essence of the human family is that it combines —uniquely—two different systems of primate relatedness: the mother-child bond of chimpanzees and the male-female pair bond of many baboons. Whenever or however it was that hominid females captured hominid males in a permanent alliance for the rearing of children, it is now a feature universal to mankind. While it is true, as Reynolds argues, that the nuclear family nowhere exists as the highest level of social organization, autonomous extended families are found. In fact, one of the most striking features of many primitive societies is the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by family groups—an odd development if the multimale group were the origin of our social system.

All in all, Reynolds has produced a significant book. It is to be regretted that some editor did not terrorize him into writing a readable prose, relegating his endless bibliographical quibbles to the footnotes and equipping his book with a usable index instead of a page and a half summary of topics. cc

IN FOCUS

So Long, St. George

by Stephen L. Tanner

***The Slaying of the Dragon: Modern Tales of the Playful Imagination*; Edited by Franz Rottensteiner; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.**

This collection, announces Franz Rottensteiner in his introduction, gives us none of the traditional "high" fantasy of heroic quests in imaginary lands, filled with magic and sorcery and pitting good against evil. Such fantasy, Rottensteiner argues, can provide little insight into modern society or the human mind because it is rooted in past worlds divorced from the peculiar stress and pressure of the contemporary real world.

The fantasy represented in this collection is something different. It oscillates between the real and fantastic, the ordinary and extraordinary, the plausible and implausible. It is not a mere escape from a complex and confused age. "It challenges the certainties of life" and "is, ultimately, literature of doubt, not of affirmation." It can protest a too complacent world, question established norms, and challenge what is usually taken for granted. It can stress the irrational and unknown or unknowable realms of human life and raise unsettling questions about reason, reality, and the human psyche. By undermining fixed notions of reality, suggests Rottensteiner, this genre can probe and illuminate the real world often more effectively than realistic writing can.

Although Rottensteiner does not use the term, the genre he describes is often called "magical realism," a term applied since the 1950's to certain works of South American fiction, and which has increased in currency since Gabriel Garcia Márquez received the Nobel Prize for Literature. The genre has been called "a pleasant joke on 'realism,'" and is really not so much a challenge to conventions of literary realism as to the basic assumptions of modern positivistic thought, the soil in which realism flourished. Some feel its inquiries go deep, questioning the political and metaphysical definitions of the real many of us live by. Its basic effect is aimed at unsettling our normal expectations as a means of stimulating and renewing our sense of wonder.

The 11 stories in this collection are by Dino Buzzati, Julio Cortázar, Jorge Luis Borges, Mircea Eliade, Carlos Fuentes, Italo Calvino, Ilse Aichinger, J.G. Ballard, Donald Barthelme, Joyce Carol Oates, and Stanislaw Lem. The subjects include a man who contemplates salamanders in an aquarium so intensely that he becomes one; a woman who is transported, as in a hectic trip across town, from the grave back to the womb; a dead giant washed ashore and gradually dismembered by souvenir hunters and enterprising dealers in by-products; a woman who gives birth to an enormous emerald; and a beautiful woman who is merely the outer casing for an insect-like killer robot. The title story, set in 1902, tells of the cruel and purposeless destruction in the mountains of Italy of a family of rather harmless reptiles purported to be dragons. The tale is an ironically symbolic rendering of technological man's rejection of the stuff of fairy tales.

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These "tales of the playful imagination" are engaging and sometimes startling. They appeal perhaps to our childhood self, that receptiveness to the spell of even implausible narrative. However, the claim that they probe and illuminate human experience in significant ways may be overstated. On the whole, their significance lies in their manifestation of the fertility of the human imagination and the mysterious and perennial allure of storytelling. cc

Stephen L. Tanner is professor of English at Brigham Young University.

Erratic Entrepreneurs

by Gavin D. Arbuckle

James Grant: *Bernard M. Baruch: The Adventures of a Wall Street Legend*; Simon & Schuster; New York.

Stanley Jackson: *J.P. Morgan*; Stein & Day; New York.

Writers of worthwhile biographies must not only research their facts carefully, they must also highlight the moral, imaginative, or philosophic significance of their subjects' lives. Both James Grant's *Bernard Baruch* and Stanley Jackson's *J.P. Morgan* are well researched and clearly written, but both fail to tell us why we should care about either of these two idiosyncratic businessmen. Baruch's transformation from a freewheeling stock market speculator in the early 1900's to a statist advisor to Presidents between the wars could have served as a basis for a broad treatment of the relations between businessmen and government, but Grant contents himself with careful accounts of Baruch's personal relations with his colleagues and with details of his stock market transactions. The career of J.P. Morgan, the great banker who directed many of the giant industrial mergers of the late 19th century, invites a discussion of industrial concentration and restriction of competition. Jackson looks merely at Morgan's art acquisitions, his luxurious vacations, and his autocratic personal manner.

Baruch's career presents the same paradox as that of many businessmen who become advisors and employees of government. In private life a beneficiary and champion of free enterprise, Baruch became in public service an advocate of the most onerous government direction and control of the economy. He seems not so much to have changed his principles as to have followed no consistent principles at all.

The philosophical metamorphosis of businessmen who begin receiving government checks has been widely observed. Almost all businessmen not on government payrolls advocate free enterprise and limited government. But hardly any interventionist excess of the last half-century, from import restrictions and farm subsidies to price and wage controls to loan guarantees to failing firms, has proceeded without the approval and support of at least some businessmen turned government advisors.

The ideological shallowness of many businessmen has several causes. In the first place, any demanding occupation tends to create a narrowness of outlook. At the same time, professional success encourages businessmen to regard themselves as authorities on every imaginable subject. But when not dealing with technical problems, businessmen typically let personal friendships and social trends—not deep convictions or broad understanding—shape their attitudes and outlook.

Nor is it likely that anyone will ever learn political constancy from the world of high finance. For a speculator or any large scale businessman, the guiding rule is not to fight the market. When an investment fails to prosper, it should be abandoned immediately and replaced with one that is rising in the market. A stock that is a good buy today may be a poor one tomorrow, and success goes to the investor most willing to abandon poor prospects rapidly and revise his opinion in response to current events. Constancy in holding unpopular investments or in holding to earlier opinions when the market is hostile is regarded in financial circles as unenterprising and foolish.

Financial dealers moving into government service naturally tend to view political trends as they view the stock market. Perhaps alone of those who use the ghastly phrase, they *believe* in the "marketplace of ideas." Like the professional stock trader, they view the underlying soundness of an idea as of far less importance than the current advantages of subscribing to it. As Grant aptly sums up Baruch's movement from champion of free enterprise to advisor to the New Deal:

> To intellectuals, political ideas lived and breathed. To Baruch, they were considerably less lifelike than power, party and friendship, and he was usually ready to sacrifice philosophical consistency to any one of those considerations.

When government intervention is popular, such businessmen view defenders of individual freedom not as principled idealists but as incompetents, like investors who miss the bull market by unwisely tying up their assets in low-yield bonds. Lamenting the captive nations of Eastern Europe may appear to these businessmen as worthwhile as lamenting the fate of the shareholders of Penn Central. (Small businessmen, who typically lack the ability to switch products quickly, are commonly less nimble in switching political commitments as well.)

One of the more durable myths of conservative politics is that government can automatically be made less intrusive and expansionist if enough businessmen can be installed in important posts. But businessmen as a class are probably unsuited by experience and attitude to challenging the intellectually committed advocates of expanding government power. Leadership for ideological change must come from thinkers, not dealers. Yet if principled conservatives impel a shift in popular views of government, businessmen can be relied on to follow in the hope of making trading profits on the change. cc

Gavin Arbuckle is an economist working in Ottawa, Ontario.

Socialism Sanctified

by Brent Chesley

Dale Vree: *From Berkeley to East Berlin and Back*; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; Nashville, TN; $9.95.

Dale Vree begins his book by recounting the experiences in the radical 60's that led him to leave Berkeley and sample life in the "worker's paradise" of East Berlin. Such a decision makes Vree seem admirable: at least he did not begin by demanding radical changes in American society and end by indulging in radical decadence and selfishness, as many other Berkeley revolutionaries did. Vree rejected the hypocrisy of American leftist movements, but when he tried life behind the Iron Curtain he found it wanting, too. He expected people living under a Communist regime to be morally superior, but he discovered that average East Berliners

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were no better than average Americans. He discovered that Marx and Pelagius were wrong. He also discovered, in a drab church in East Berlin, with "no majestic choirs or fancy vestments," that Christ is right.

Vree focuses his considerable analytical powers upon modern movements in Christianity by contrasting the inadequacies of American Christianity with East German Catholicism, in which faith is strong and theology is orthodox because "people in East Germany can *get* nothing from church; they can only *give*." From his visit to East Berlin and his subsequent reflections, Vree draws three conclusions:

> (1) *Theological modernism is a journey away from Christ, not toward Him.* This was certainly the case with me, and I've never seen any evidence that it has been otherwise with others. (2) As important as it is to transform social structures on behalf of the less fortunate, *to reduce Christianity to social reform alone is to sap it of its unique power*, the power to change lives, without which social reform is a superficial undertaking. (3) *One of the most insidious threats to the church today is our own militant anti-Communism.*

In defense of his surprising third conclusion, Vree argues that anti-Communism is simply an "unwillingness to be tested by persecution" and that people use anti-Communism to justify consumerism. When Vree's arguments are put together, however, they do not substantiate his conclusion.

Also problematic are the relationships Vree posits between capitalism, socialism, and the values of the cultural revolution of the 60's. His initial insights are good: he sees that capitalism, once antithetical to the counterculture and its values, has now absorbed those values. Whereas it once encouraged the virtues of hard work and self-sacrifice, "capitalism now *requires* an ethos of self-indulgence." Having discovered that mass hedonism can be profitable, *capitalists* have presided over the "institutionalization of the cultural revolution" in American society. Vree's diagnosis of this shift in values is acute, but his assumption that a new socialism would prove superior to the new capitalism is not convincing.

This same puzzling assumption about the desirability of socialism also mars an otherwise strong final chapter, "A Christian Response," in which Vree

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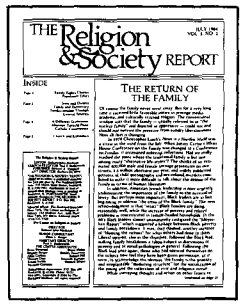

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reminds American Christians of their need to discover a true humility, that Original Sin makes people equal, and that the real enemy in life is not "another nation, race, or class," but "one's own sin." The final lesson of his experiences and reflections is that the real "solution to decadence" is "authentic Christian faith." But Vree assumes a connection between socialism and Christianity, as though Christianity alone were incomplete. Vree's assumption damages his analysis. cc

Brent Chesley is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Notre Dame.

Laborious Hedonism

Perry Pascarella: *The New Achievers: Creating a Modern Work Ethic*; The Free Press; New York.

In America, speaking out against work was once like saying nasty things about motherhood. Even now that attacks on motherhood have become common, Perry Pascarella makes it clear in *The New Achievers* that work is still sacred to the yuppie mentality. No longer, however, is work the spiritual exercise it was in Calvinism: restraining the corrupt desires of a fallen nature is not the aim. Rather, the ambitious computer programmer now must drive himself hard so he can buy a new BMW. It's high-tech materialism.

Pascarella trys hard to transform air-conditioned office buildings into cathedrals for the new creed expounded by such authorities as Taoist/physicist Fritjof Capra and theologian Hans Küng. But the prose style is as suspect as the new faith:

> The manager's ability to contribute to human development and create viable organizations in today's values environment will depend on two things that are far more important than the technical skills he or she may have. First is the matter of what the manager believes—what his or her worldview is. Second is the degree to which the manager will employ a management style that expresses these beliefs.

The reader cannot but wonder about people like John DeLorean, whose engineering expertise was divorced from any coherent sense of moral obligation. The possibility that hoards of business-suited men and women will follow in his erratic footsteps is disturbing. (GSV)

Wet Cement

by Brian Murray

Iain Banks: *The Wasp Factory*; Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Iain Banks's first novel invites comparison with the work of Ian McEwan. During the mid-1970's, McEwan began to establish himself as one of Britain's most successful writers of fiction. *First Love, Last Rites*—his first collection of short stories—sold unusually well and won the prestigious Somerset Maugham Award. *The Cement Garden*, his first novel, was widely and on the whole very favorably reviewed on both sides of the Atlantic. McEwan, observed the critics, employs prose that is vivid and remarkably controlled; he constructs plots that are as riveting as they are tightly constructed.

Still, some critics have admitted to being puzzled by McEwan's frequent depiction of unpleasant characters caught in unsavory situations, and by his apparent preoccupation with many of those bodily details that polite people avoid mentioning in mixed groups at supper parties. They point, for example, to *The Cement Garden*, in which four school-age siblings quietly bury their widowed mother in a trunk in the cellar and, left to themselves, grow increasingly filthy and weird. These children, suggested the American novelist Anne Tyler, are "so consistently unpleasant, unlikeable and bitter that we can't believe in them, and we certainly can't identify with them."

But the ghastliness in McEwan's fiction is not often gratuitous. Like William Golding before him, McEwan is a serious, unusually gifted artist whose use of the disgusting and the bizarre helps him reveal the thin margin that separates civilization from chaos, and the human from the brutish. Surely McEwan does not want us to "identify" with his characters as much as he wants us to recognize them as perhaps only slightly exaggerated representatives of Britain's lower and middle classes during a period of profound social discontinuity—a period in which the wide collapse of traditional behavioral guidelines has been accompanied by the steady rise of a youth subculture that loudly promotes the notion that man's main purpose in life is to pursue pleasure, however mindless or fleeting.

Iain Banks's first novel, *The Wasp Factory*, is set against a rather dreary Scottish landscape and features characters who would not look out of place in a volume of McEwan's stories. Frank Cauldhame, its narrator, is a tubby 17-year-old who once carefully plotted the deaths of a couple of his relatives, and who now amuses himself by torturing insects and strangling hares. Frank's older brother Eric is an escapee from a psychiatric hospital, who enjoys setting fire to dogs. The father of this charming pair is a demented biochemist who has written a book arguing that the earth is a Möbius strip, not a sphere.

Like McEwan, Banks clearly wants his readers to ponder again the uncomfortable fact that human beings—particularly males—are eminently capable of committing the most repulsive crimes. And like McEwan, he appears to be interested in the continuing ramifications of what in this country used to be called "the generation gap." In *The Wasp Factory*, as in many of McEwan's pieces, adolescents are shown taking an easy retreat into a solipsistic void where adults are simply assumed to be superfluous dolts, and where older cultural mores have not the slightest bearing.

Unfortunately, Banks is not yet the writer that McEwan is. *The Wasp Factory* drags badly at times and includes some transitions—and a "surprise" conclusion—that are simply clunky. Banks also appears to be uncertain of his tone. *The Wasp Factory* thus oddly combines a Roald Dahl-like drollery with the sort of forced scatological jocosity that one finds in frat houses and the *National Lampoon*. Though *The Wasp Factory* is occasionally arresting and largely well-intentioned, it certainly is not—despite its publisher's claims—another *Lord of the Flies*. cc

Brian Murray is professor of English at Youngstown State University.

Worms in the Big Apple

by David Vicinanzo

Karen Gerard: *American Survivors: Cities and Other Scenes*; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

The title of this book is misleading. Karen Gerard's subject is *one* city, New York, and the "scenes" she discusses are random sketches of New York's political, economic, and cultural life. Ge-

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rard, former deputy mayor of New York under Edward Koch, writes like a politician: her style is largely anecdotal, and the book meanders tourist-like on the fringes of economic and social theory. While she presents no coherent plan for the city's regeneration (as the title suggests, New York is merely a "survivor" and will continue merely to "survive"), she does, as a political insider, identify some of the formidable obstacles to improving life in New York.

Many of these obstacles, she observes, are either created or sustained by governmental intervention. Writing about bureaucratic torpor, she observes that "a little job insecurity can be a great motivator" for mid-level government officials. A single apartment-complex proposal spawns a five-pound environmental-impact statement. Higher taxes push businesses out of New York into states where lower taxes and new communications technology improve both profit margins and the living conditions of employees. Manhattan's Westway project is a case in point: construction of the sorely needed highway has been enjoined for a decade because of solicitous regard for the mating habits of Hudson River striped bass.

The housing crisis is also the product of ill-considered governmental interference. Rent-control laws first enacted as emergency provisions during the Second World War are still in force. The *bargain* these regulations created was transformed into a renter's *right* after the war. The resulting "irrational behavior and distortions in the operations of the marketplace" led to a decline in maintenance and the eventual abandonment of thousands of buildings that could no longer be operated profitably. As housing stock decreased, the value of the remaining stock rose dramatically. Many New Yorkers moved to the suburbs where they found full houses for less money than they would have paid for a small condominium or cooperative apartment in New York City. The tax base shrank, services declined, and life in New York became less pleasant for those who remained. Gerard's solution is to eliminate rent controls and to promote tenant ownership of the thousands of apartments owned by the city. Her suggestion, while sound as a long-term economic matter, does not explain how the less-affluent New Yorker will put together a substantial down payment to buy an apartment, nor how he will pay the exorbitant rents that will persist until the deregulated housing market expands. Moreover, the "sweat mortgage" concept, in which abandoned buildings are sold cheaply to those willing to repair them at their own expense, has little to offer the myriad fatherless families other government programs have helped to create.

As a study of urban life and policy, Gerard's book lacks the depth and direction of, for example, the work of Jane Jacobs. How seriously, after all, can we take an author who turns from musing on whether traditional weddings are back and why Phil Donahue doesn't dye his hair, to shameless indulgence in self-promotion ("I was a Cassandra in the early 1970s")? With this kind of short-circuited thinking, it's no wonder that Gerard must resort to vague calls for "change" whenever she has no clear recommendation for a particular problem. Nonetheless, many of her central observations—that entrepreneurs, not mayors, make jobs; that shortsighted government cultivates long-term crises; and that a populous city need not be an unpleasant place to live—are refreshingly sane and make worthwhile reading. cc

David Vicinanzo is a lawyer and writer in New York City.

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On "Transports of Power"

The article by Momcilo Selic on Milovan Djilas (*Chronicles*, September 1985) is a piece of rare quality. The language has the descriptive power of poetry while still obeying the discipline of knowledge. The author can convey the Montenegrin atmosphere to us outsiders and thus throw light on the enigmatic figure of Djilas. My chief praise, however, is that the piece is not subject to any party line, right or left, regarding what should be found black and what white. Refreshing, that, in our day and age.

Gerhart Niemeyer
University of Notre Dame

On "Leave the Kids Alone"

I read with interest your essay "Leave the Kids Alone" in the September issue of *Chronicles*. Concerning prayer in public schools, I wonder whether the dispute might be less a question of "religious liberty" than of "thought control." I have therefore devised an inexpensive experiment which might clarify the issues.

The problem is that many of those parents who are religiously inclined claim that their offspring ought to be able to pray in school, while those who are not religiously inclined argue that institutionalized moments of prayer or silence in the classroom would, via the very real power of peer pressure, unduly influence their children. What would happen, then, if schools in which this problem is particularly apparent were to designate a special time and place for a moment of prayer or silence? If school begins at 8:30 a.m., those children feeling it necessary to begin the academic day with communal prayer might be permitted to do so in some temporarily assigned space, perhaps a music room or cafeteria, at 8:25 or so, joining the nonpraying students in homeroom a few minutes later. Children wishing to pray communally in school can do so; children not wishing to pray are not subjected to the discomfort of being immersed, however temporarily, in someone else's religion at taxpayer expense.

Such an experiment would permit us to identify the real motives of the opposing sides in the school prayer controversy. If agitators *against* prayer in public schools are simply interested in the "right" of their children to enjoy freedom from religious peer pressure at taxpayer expense, they should be pleased to learn of an officially sanctioned sequestration of religion from the "learning environment." On the other hand, those opposing even the use of empty school time and space for a moment's prayer or silence might logically be presumed to be against religion *per se*; they would appear in this case to be primarily interested in denying prayer to religious students.

Similarly, if agitators *for* prayer in public schools are simply interested in the "right" of their children to enjoy a moment's communal silence or prayer, they should be pleased to learn of the setting aside of a special time and space for that moment. Pro-prayer forces opposing the relegation of communal public-school prayer to a special time and place might logically be presumed to be primarily interested in subjecting nonpraying students to religious peer pressure.

If this experiment were to succeed in bringing about a stable détente between pro- and anti-public-school-prayer forces, we might satisfactorily conclude that the issue has actually been one of "religious liberty" all along, as both sides claim. If, however, it were to fail, or if its trial were to be denied in advance, we might satisfactorily conclude that the issue is actually one of "thought control," neither side wishing to give up access to the minds of the children of the opposing camp. In such a case, my own suspicion is that American public schools will remain an ideological battleground for years to come.

Most of us dislike the idea of sending our youngsters to battlegrounds; we'd rather that they be schooled in a manner appropriate to our own cultural inclinations. Small wonder, then, that so many of us feel cheated not only by the disparate philosophies of schooltime religion, but by the nature of modern taxpayer-supported schooling itself.

John C. McLoughlin
Tesuque, New Mexico

The Editor Replies:

Your suggestion has the very great merit of clarifying the issues at stake. Its implementation would be almost impossible for the very reasons you indicate. Many believers, looking into their own hearts, would admit to a hidden agenda: the desire to re-Christianize the schools.

For all the attractions of fairness and impartiality, serious controversies are more often settled by an appeal—no matter how veiled—to the principle of power. The case of prayer in schools is no different. What it comes down to, in the end, is the simple question of whose values are to prevail. The failure to take a stand on *that* issue would be moral suicide.

Still, your idea should be put on the table of every school board meeting. If it proves to be impractical, that would raise the unpleasant question of why we continue to pay taxes to support government schooling. cc

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The FarmAid Concert only managed to raise about $10 million, but the reverberations of the event may reach far beyond the bottom line, farther even than American farm policy. Weeks after the event, impressions linger: Merle Haggard, who assured the more than 70,000 people in the audience that the concert was only the beginning; Emmylou Harris, whose singing and physical presence are almost enough to reassure us that American womanhood can never go entirely bad—the blood is too good; Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers backing up Bob Dylan; Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, and Waylon Jennings together again. It was almost heartwarming to see ol' Waylon, 20 pounds heavier and looking 20 years younger.

Charlie Daniels may have provided the high spot of the all-day concert. For years, Charlie has been thumbing his nose at the anti-American elites and, in his own strange way, pointing to the goodness at the center. He has sung about Vietnam ("Still in Saigon"), freedom ("You Can Leave This Long-Haired Country Boy Alone"), and even his native state ("Carolina"). Now, just in time, he has a song for the American farmer in which he also manages to condemn technology transfer to the Soviets. Politics? As Charlie summed it up, politicians have had their chance, and they blew it "in one of the biggest screw-ups since we let Russia stay in Berlin." More remarkably, he threatened that if even one dollar got into the hands of politicians, he would never do another concert like this again.

This is not to say there was no politicking going on. Neil Young, who along with Dylan represented the bad old days of the 60's, campaigned for the Harkin bill and contributed a letter warning against the peril of American agriculture swamping and destroying native farming all over the world. He had a point: no nation, certainly not the U.S., can afford to become that dependent on international markets for its food. Unintentionally, Neil Young provided the most amusing few moments, when he invited Waylon Jennings to join him in an *authentic* country song. Poor Waylon stood there, thumbs in belt, with an expression of something like amused indulgence for this rocker trying to be a real American.

After all the hype and excitement die down, a number of impressions begin to crystallize into a thesis. The fact is that a large number of the songs sung were tributes, of a sort, to America. Waylon's "America," Alabama's "40-Hour Week," Charlie Daniels' "American Farmer" are all aimed at a populist rediscovery of the American experience. When you throw in Merle Haggard, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, and —strange to say—Tom Petty (a top 40 rocker, pure and simple), it almost amounts to a movement.

The one real jarring note was the presence of John Cougar Mellencamp, whose "Pink Houses" is the most effective protest song ever written against bourgeois American life. What in the world was he doing in this crowd, prancing around like an androgynous Jim Morrison? The weirdest part was his evident happiness to be there and his enthusiastic support for the entire project. It can't be the visibility—Cougar is one of the richest singers in the business. In an interview the next day, Mr. Mellencamp provided the clue. He remarked on how good the concert made people feel about themselves and added that he never wanted to make music that didn't have that effect.

Watching the concert took me back to other similar events—not Live Aid so much as folk festivals in the 60's and, of course, Woodstock. Even fairly decent human beings back then found themselves caught up in an anti-American fervor which seemed like the wave of the future. But here in Champaign, Illinois, the stage was decorated with an American flag motif —even the title was symbolic: FarmAid, a Concert for America.

Real revolutions are made in the heart, not on the streets or in political meetings. If country and rock musicians become sincere in their desire to express the heart of America, it will mean more good than all the funds they will ever raise, more good even than if the earth should open up and swallow the entire Federal bureaucracy. cc

Poetry is out, politics is in at the Modern Language Association these days. According to a recent article in the *Boston Review*, a publication subsidized by the National Endowment of the Arts and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts, "a new political ethos . . . is emerging at the heart of literary study" as practiced by members of the MLA, now celebrating its 100th anniversary. A "new guard," reports the enthusiastic *BR* author, is "putting literary study on a new course, one that is distinctly more political and engaged than the traditional approach."

Those attending MLA conventions now spend less time on subjects like "Samuel Johnson and Scriptural Tradition" or "Shakespeare and New Criticism" and instead are filing into sessions devoted to "Power and Gender in the Western Epic" and "Representatives of Colonization: Class, Race, Gender, and the Fate of the Humanities." New subsidiary organizations such as "The Marxist Literary Group" and "The Gay Caucus" have emerged to subvert the "prevailing patriarchal bourgeois view of the world." The newest critical theory is valued not because it illuminates classic texts but because it has "progressive political implications . . . [and] disables the sort of blind faith a Reagan requires to thrive." This may mean "getting away from literature," but it also means

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"getting closer to something that seems to be gaining ground . . . and that is cultural criticism." Some leaders in the MLA are now proposing that only by "discarding the category of literature" can we "create greater textual democracy."

So much for Secretary Bennett's Great Books program. So much, too, for the humane vision of Matthew Arnold, George Gordon, J.C. Collins, and the other founders of English literature as an academic discipline. Arguably, Arnold, *et al.*, were seriously mistaken in supposing, as many of them actually did, that study of English literature could replace Christianity as the integrative center of Western culture. Still, it is hard not to imagine that the author of *Culture and Anarchy* would be scandalized at what has become of modern literary study. Intended originally as a support for Western civilization, literary study has become just one more academic shell game—a useful subterfuge allowing radical utopians with a hatred for America to live off the taxes paid by honest people.

As the political hero of the MLA asked, "What is to be done?" In *The Clouds* of Aristophanes, there may be a model for action: the father of a son whose morals have been corrupted by teachers burns down the university. If average taxpayers were told what the overpaid literature professors at state universities were up to, many English departments would begin to feel the heat. cc

Supply-side poetry is in the planning stage at Waldenbooks, a bookstore chain with 920 outlets. Interviewed recently in the *Wall Street Journal*, Walden's merchandise manager proposes to test the market with a selection of 50 titles. He hopes to discover "50 to 60 stores hungry for poetry." The plan sounds good until you hear the names: Philip Levine, Gary Snyder, Derek Walcott, and W.S. Merwin. Merwin arguably deserves a chance, but Levine and Snyder are two very good reasons why nobody reads poetry anymore. It is better to go hungry than die of food poisoning. cc

Hi-tech morality may not work out quite the way its proponents have promised. The last few years, Newt Gingrich, Guy Sorman, and others have been espousing a new brand of conservatism "that successfully unites

REVISIONS

We the Peoples

The central government of the United States concentrated the efforts of the last 125 years on a relentless attack against all forms of social organization that stand between the helpless individual and the all-powerful leviathan. One by one the barriers have fallen—the rights of states, the self-government of municipalities, the independence of schools, colleges, and universities, the autonomy of families, and—before too long—the freedom of churches.

If the Anti-Federalists were brought back to life, they would be justified in saying "I told you so." The opponents of the Constitution came from all parts of the country and represented a diversity of opinion. Many of their particular concerns were later addressed by the Bill of Rights, but their fundamental objection went unanswered. As Patrick Henry put it to the Virginia Ratifying Convention: "The question turns, sir, on that poor little thing—the expression, *we, the people*, instead of the states of America." It was hard enough for the states to repress the villainy of bureaucrats in their midst. "If sheriffs thus immediately under the eye of our State Legislature and Judiciary have dared to commit these outrages, what would they not have done if their masters had been at Philadelphia or New York?" Besides, what was to prevent the potentially omnipotent President and Congress from usurping all the powers of the states?

The answers given by the federalists seemed sound and reasonable. Hamilton pointed out that a state would use its militia. Madison went further in suggesting a concert of states against Federal usurpation. However, neither nullification nor secession turned out to be successful, and the states have seen themselves reduced to the status of regional bureaucratic appendages with as much independence as the National Guard (formerly state militias). City governments, on the other hand, are grateful to receive Federal tax revenues and whine—as Mayor Washington did recently in Japan—about not receiving their "fair share" of other people's money.

To appreciate the full extent of Anti-Federalist thought, it is necessary to make use of Herbert J. Storing's magisterial seven-volume edition. Fortunately, Storing's student, Murray Dry, has compiled a one-volume selection of the more interesting documents (*The Anti-Federalist: Writings by the Opponents of the Constitution*; University of Chicago Press, $9.95 paper). The abridgment has so many strong points—a full index, excellent notes and introductions—that it would be churlish to complain about the rather narrow selection. *The Essential Anti-Federalist* (edited by W.B. Allen, Gordon Lloyd, and Margie Lloyd; University Press of America; Lanham, MD) is somewhat more eclectic and covers more years, but its deficiencies outweigh these merits: no index or footnotes, an "Interpretative Essay" which glosses over authorship problems, and a curious silence on one of the main themes—the sovereignty of the states. It is not true that "the anti-federalists wanted a national government to reply to the peoples' local needs." On the contrary, that is exactly what they did not want. It is, however, what we have today, and that has made all the difference between a federal republic responsible to free citizens and a busybody bureaucracy that rules us for our own good. cc

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morality and the microprocessor." The exploration of space will actually foster traditional values, we've been told, by presenting the old Protestant work ethic with a new challenge. We should have been suspicious of this thesis after reading Tom Wolfe's *Right Stuff*, in which John Glenn emerges as the only astronaut with any principles higher than those of an alley cat. But any lingering hope for microchip morality is quite dashed by a report in the *Chicago Tribune* that as a few NASA officials and university professors began contemplating "intimate behavior" aboard space stations, ethical concerns often seem to have dropped away, like a no-longer-needed booster stage.

Yvonne Clearwater, a NASA consultant, suggested in a recent *Psychology Today* article that NASA might need to construct private quarters in space for the "significantly related couple." When it was suggested to NASA officials at Ames Research Center that the government ought to permit only *married* couples to have sex in space, a psychologist responded, "Come on. This is California." Stephen Sapp, a professor of religion at the University of Miami, would prefer to see marriage as the extraterrestrial norm, but is convinced that fornication in space might not be as bad as its earthy counterparts:

"Here you've got people in close quarters, working together for a long time. Obviously, these people would have relationships. It wouldn't be as bad as a one-night stand. Then again, what is a one-night stand if you're going around the Earth every two hours? If the Russians and Americans docked in space and switched partners, that would be a one-night stand."

Which naturally leads the *Chicago Tribune* to patriotic anxiety: "Are Russians ahead of us on exploring sex in space?" So far, the *Trib* reports, the Soviets are saying nothing on the subject. But given the panic that broke out in the public schools in the 1950's when the Soviets got their satellite up first, we can only imagine the pedagogical hysteria in *today's* grammar schools if it was ever announced that the Russians had beaten us at "doing it" in zero gravity. cc

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

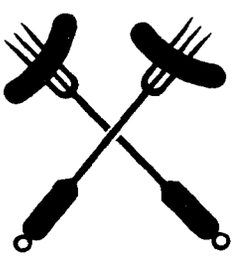
Food for Thought

One of the dumber remarks of the 1984 Presidential campaign—a campaign notable for its dumb remarks—came from Joe Frank Harris, governor of Georgia. Asked if he approved of Geraldine Ferraro, he replied: "Yes. I asked her if she had eaten grits and liked them, and she said, 'Yes'—and she passed the test."

He should have asked if she knew what they were. Most politicians will eat *anything* for a vote.

* * *

Here in the South, we don't like our politicians red, but hot dogs are another matter. Hot dog trials at the *Chicago Tribune* put the ruby-red "Rebel" brand dead last, but a weenie expert told the paper that bright red varieties



are popular throughout the South. Consumers in other regions prefer a dog with a brownish cast; on the West Coast they like a coarse grind and heavy smoke; Northeasterners like a *soupçon* of garlic.

* * *

"Southern-fried chic" has receded somewhat from its high-water mark in the first year of the Carter Administration, but it is still to be found here and there. A *Raleigh News and Observer* reporter found, to her dismay, a New York restaurant called Carolina, where the "barbecue" is grilled on mesquite and served on a bed of leaf lettuce with Dijon mustard. A side order of slaw costs $2.25. The owner, a native New Yorker who concocted his recipes himself, says the restaurant's name came to him in a dream. Maybe he should try red hot dogs.

* * *

Male bourbon-drinkers beware! In the worst news for Southern taste since the discovery that snuff-dipping causes gum recession, Judith Gavaler of the University of Pittsburgh has reported that your Julep contains betasitosterol, biochanin A, and genistein.

What (you might well ask) are those? Well, they are phyto-estrogens—estrogens derived from plants. Men with healthy livers probably have nothing to worry about, but if you have cirrhosis, these chemicals may produce the same unfortunate effects as animal (or steroidal) estrogen, to wit: your voice may change, your beard may thin, and your figure may become more . . . voluptuous. (And you thought white wine did it, didn't you?) Of course, if you have cirrhosis, you have more important things to worry about.

* * *

Speaking of food, an AP dispatch in the Norfolk *Ledger-Star* reports that Southside Virginia tobacco growers, in a move about 200 years overdue, are diversifying into crops like broccoli and cantaloupe. It is absurd that Richmond households have been paying premium prices for California cantaloupes that average two and a half pounds and are grown with thick rinds to protect them in transit. Now that they can buy thinner-skinned, six-pound, locally grown melons, we must hope they haven't forgotten what cantaloupes are supposed to be like.

* * *

In other agricultural news, a UPI dispatch reported that the 21,000 pound satellite carried into orbit by Challenger in April 1984 contained (among other things) kudzu seeds from the Park Seed Company. The seeds were

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to have been picked up and returned to earth in February. I have scanned my usual sources diligently for news of their return and some hint of how they liked it up there, but I have seen nary a word. *Why is this being kept from the American people?*

* * *

Kudzu in space—and rhesus monkeys in Florida. The *New York Times* News Service reports that, like walking catfish, leprous armadillos, giant South American toads, wild parrots, love bugs, and retired Canadians, monkeys have come to Florida, liked it, and stayed. Some 300 troublesome specimens, apparently descended from eight escapees from the set of a 1939 Tarzan movie, started attacking citizens and otherwise making a nuisance of themselves in the wilds around Silver Springs.

The hard-pressed officers of the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission ordered Silver Springs to do something and found themselves labeled "savages" and "Gestapo scumbags" when Silver Springs began to trap the monkeys and sell them to a Pennsylvania medical research supply house. At last word, the trapping had stopped, and 140 or so monkeys were being left undisturbed—but no doubt there are more by now.

* * *

Monkeys notwithstanding, the South has, for virtually the first time, turned up on the top of a "quality of life" survey. The Southern states have finished last in these things with monotonous regularity ever since H.L. Mencken put them down (*way* down) in his studies of "civilization" in the 1920's.

Now Robert Pierce, a New York geographer, has asked people to tell him what *they* think is important about a place (researchers from Mencken on have always decided that themselves). Pierce's sample of New Yorkers told him that they valued, in order: economic conditions, climate, low crime rates, housing, education, health care, recreation, transportation, and the arts. Weighting accordingly, Pierce determined that the best American city was Greensboro, followed by Knoxville, Asheville, Nashville, and Raleigh. Weighting the factors (rather than counting them all equally) reduced the scores of really big cities and improved those of smaller places. New York, for example, was 26th (of 277) with an unweighted index, but fell to 156th when the weights were applied.

Perhaps shipping those poor monkeys to Pennsylvania *was* a cruel thing to do. cc

John Shelton Reed will deliver the H. Allen Smith Memorial Lecture at the University of Southeastern North Carolina in March. His topic is "Science Lies When It Says Hogmeat Has Little Bugs in It."

TYPEFACES

A Woman's Dreams

"Most women have no Characters at all," wrote Alexander Pope: "Good as well as ill,/Woman's at best a Contradiction still." The contradiction of womanhood will perhaps never be fully solved, but it has generally been considered manageable within marriage and family. *Outside* of the home, women are . . . well, we've made no progress since Pope. We're repelled by the defeminized professional woman who looks and acts like a man; yet, the too overtly feminine career woman —even if she's a bank executive—fits only too well into the image of the oldest profession of all. It's no wonder that even the enlightened George Bernard Shaw could say that "a woman's business is to get married as soon as possible."

Historically, the great majority of American women *have* devoted their lives to marriage and family. As late as the 1950's it used to be said that women who went to college were chiefly interested in an MRS. degree. A survey of women graduating from Smith about that time showed that marriage and family were still higher in their priorities than career or personal independence. But a look at the evolution of two of the nation's most popular magazines for women—*Ladies' Home Journal* and *Cosmopolitan*—reveals that the ideals of many American women are no longer rooted in domesticity. Whether training for space flights or hooting it up at the local all-male review, *today's* woman has her eyes on the stars—and lower.

That *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies' Home Journal* aim at different segments of the female population is apparent to anyone who has surveyed their covers while waiting in line at the grocery store checkout stand. There is the sexy *Cosmo* cover girl, wearing more makeup than clothing, surrounded by cover copy headlining articles on sex, fashion, sex, career, and more sex. In contrast, the fully dressed woman on the cover of a typical *Journal* is not a liberated harlot. In fact, much of the magazine is devoted to such unerotic topics as microwave recipes and home decorating tips.

The two magazines have always projected divergent images, but 25 years ago both periodicals assumed an essentially family-centered feminine audience. In the late 50's and early 60's, both publications generally featured pictures of couples, *married* couples, on their covers, not just cover

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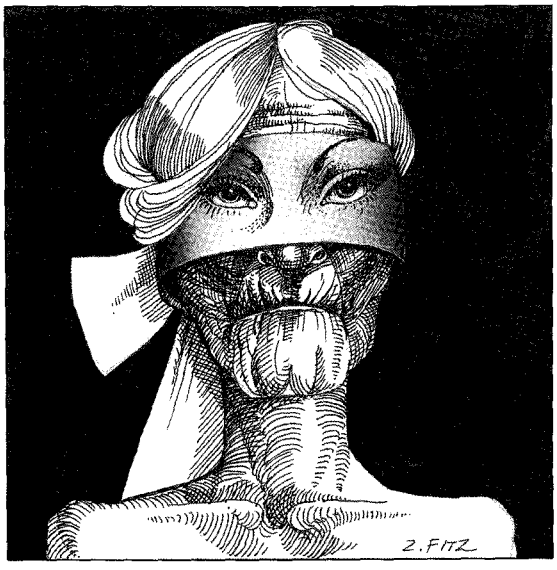
girls. Articles with titles like "Why This Marriage Survived" (*Cosmo*) and "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" (*Journal*) appeared in both. While Dr. Spock held forth in the *Journal* on how "mothers of small children [can] keep from being driven crazy," *Cosmo* was investigating ways of improving husband-wife communication and of using new psychiatric theories to provide an "answer to family conflict."

Advertisements in both were likewise aimed at a domestic sensibility. Ads in *Cosmo* in the early 60's still appealed to "MARRIED WOMEN" and to wives interested in "the Ideal Marriage." Child-related ads were not numerous in *Cosmo*, but they were there, offering products to ease baby's teething pain or to improve a slow child's reading skills. Hard as it is now to believe, *Cosmo* even ran public service ads reminding "growing families" to "worship together this week." The numerous food ads in a *Journal* from the same period invited readers to "treat your children" to spaghetti or to make meals "the whole family loves" with rice. Other ads extolled the virtues of name-brand diapers, baby shampoo, and children's aspirin. Perhaps because stay-at-home mothers had time for such diversions, both *Cosmo* and the *Journal* regularly featured short stories and even complete novels, flanked predictably by book-club ads.

To be sure, significant differences between *Cosmo* and the *Journal* were apparent even 25 years ago. The blissfully wedded couple on the cover of *Cosmo* was then usually drawn from royalty or the Hollywood set, while the *Journal* cover showed an anonymous pair, posed as Mr. & Mrs. Typical American. Trying to find out "How America Lives," the *Journal* profiled the achievements and woes of some average American family each month —a New Jersey schoolteacher, wife, and three children this month; a Texas oil broker, wife, and four kids the next. In contrast, *Cosmo* was chasing "the International Set," Hollywood stars, and "the great families of the world" —Sassoon, Rockefeller, Rothschild, Alba, Krupp. ("I always find the star material fascinating reading," wrote an appreciative *Cosmo* reader, "especially when it's written with the decent attitude of a publication such as *Cosmopolitan*.") It is unlikely that a series of *Cosmo* photos of swimsuit fashions could then have appeared in the *Journal*, even though each of the bathing beauties was properly identified as *Mrs. Gotrocks*. Even less likely to have appeared in the *Journal* was a provocative *Cosmo* piece on "Myths About Sex," despite the author's repeated assurances that his interest was solely in "marital success" and in helping the reader enjoy "her nocturnal interludes with her husband." *Cosmo* ads for an *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Sex* would never have run in the *Journal* (even if the book was to promote "modern married sex practice"), nor would an ad for a beauty guide for the "Alluring Woman."

For while *Cosmo* was romanticizing the "strong sexual attraction" between married (always married) television stars and was encouraging readers to find more pleasure with *their* husbands, the *Journal* was worried that the nation had become "preoccupied—almost obsessed—with the superficial aspects of sex . . . with sex as a form of entertainment." This, the *Journal* declared, was "not true sex, with its corollaries of love, marriage and childbearing." Elsewhere in its pages, the *Journal* warned its readers against "the danger in a 'harmless flirtation,'" and praised the Australians for "avoiding the problem of sex craziness in the schools" by leaving sex education to the home, forbidding cosmetics, teaching restraint as a virtue, and requiring school uniforms. *Cosmo* may have been awestruck by screen stars and rich equestrians, but the *Journal* was lauding volunteer Sunday School teachers and PTA leaders and in a remarkably prescient article was questioning whether post-Sputnik curriculum reformers "know what they are up to." Contemporary educators, the author complained, had no sense of overall purpose, no longer tried to shape "a character imbued with Christian virtues," and actively discouraged excellence as "undemocratic."

To examine these same two women's magazines today, two and a half decades later, is to see a radical shift in editorial perspective on the family and feminine identity. In *Cosmopolitan* the rejection of marriage and family is complete. The *Cosmo* cover girl now lives with (but is rarely married to) some film executive or medical student—who does *not* appear with her. *Cosmo* articles now promote "Great Sex" or "wonderfully wicked sex," practiced with as many partners as the reader can entice. Editors boast that a recent survey (tabulated and analyzed by Linda Wolfe in *Women and Sex in the 80's: The 'Cosmo' Report* [1981]) revealed that "the majori-



ty of *Cosmo* girls have had at least two lovers and many—two thirds—have had from five to more than twenty-five," although not at the same time. *Cosmo* readers are "perhaps the most sexually experienced women in western history." Now when *Cosmo* considers marriage at all, it is to tell the reader to put it off until at *least* 30 so that she can enter wedlock with "a variety of sexual experience." (What color does a *Cosmo* bride wear?)

For those who have already tied the knot—not to worry—*Cosmo* has articles on how to get a divorce as painlessly and profitably as possible and on how to explain to a boorish husband that children are now passé because they interfere with career advancement. A recent *Cosmo* quiz, "Are You a Decadent?" scolded the reader who refrains from "nicely naughty activities" and who does not "*accept* your wicked streak." The "Gay Debauchee" who "denies herself *nothing*" is praised for "earthiness and spontaneity" but cautioned about "excesses" that could land her in trouble. The *Cosmo* Golden Mean has been achieved by the woman "who's ready

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to disco until dawn or try out new erotic techniques" but who "never quite forget[s] that your *career* needs looking after."

Balancing career and eroticism can be a trick. *Cosmo* does it by urging women to accentuate their physical charms through cosmetics, exercise and diets, and (un)dress but—at the same time—warning readers that "getting ahead" at the office requires the suppression of every emotional tendency traditionally regarded as female. The aspiring executive should aim at becoming "the madwoman of the office" by learning to "channel . . . feelings toward anger rather than tears, assuming it is necessary to show any emotion at all." The *Cosmo* dichotomy is complete: Lady Macbeth by day, Cleopatra by night. There is, of course, a more ideal way to combine sexiness and career, and it, too, is in *Cosmo*: a "former call girl" who now goes by the pen name "Tiger Lily" describes in an article her work as a "therapist" who helps young men overcome "sexual dysfunction" by going to bed with them. Meanwhile, *Cosmo* laments the new "divorce of sex and emotion"; "real intimacy" and "romance" are the preferred *Cosmo* remedies.

Manufacturers of children's products no longer try to promote their goods in *Cosmo*, but the makers of bikinis, cigarettes, bank cards, perfumes, and male-stripper videos do. ("Disrobics . . . our instructors will raise your pulse and give you a workout you'll never forget.") The book-club ads still found in *Cosmo* are now far fewer and most of their titles are marked "X: Explicit sex, violence, and/or language." (*Cosmo* still carries its own fiction, though much less than before. Stories no longer focus on married or soon-to-be married couples: a typical *Cosmo* tale in a current issue traces the impassioned course of a young Southern preacher into adultery.)

Today's *Ladies' Home Journal* has also changed dramatically over the years. The intended audience is still largely wives and mothers: the articles are about *overcoming* infertility or a husband's reluctance to having children. The editors encourage readers to enjoy the holidays by involving "each family member," and contributors are still exploring ways marriages can be "saved." The numerous *LHJ* recipes serve four, not one or two, and children still appear in photos and ads. Yet a noticeable decline in the visibility of children and husbands is only one of the changes effected in the magazine by the feminist movement. In 1970, 100 radical feminists led by Susan Brownmiller held an all-day sit-in in the *LHJ* editorial offices, denouncing the publication as "one of the most demeaning magazines toward women." Before they left, the activists had won a number of concessions, including the right to publish a special eight-page supplement to the *Journal* in which they expounded their views.

The supplement was a one-time feature, but the results of feminist intimidation are still visible in the *Journal*. *LHJ* articles urge women to overcome the "early psychological conditioning" and even the "biological" tendencies which make "women . . . reluctant to cause pain or disappointment." The *LHJ* reader should stop "automatically fulfilling her husband's wishes," should stop trying to be "the perfect wife," and should learn to cherish her "private self." Only by so rethinking her approach to life can the reader ever attain "a demanding position" in the business world, which is apparently where *LHJ* now thinks women belong. The *Journal* may still argue that the ideal is "a working mother who takes her family responsibilities more seriously than her career," but editors appear reluctant to investigate the possibility that a *non*-working mother will perform her family responsibilities much better. A recent article noted the "chilling trend of younger criminals growing up more brutal than ever before," even among "smiling middle-class youths," and linked this development to a lack of "sufficient love early in life" and to a "negative" home life. But the author did not—perhaps could not—say the obvious: millions of middle-class kids are now receiving smiles but not love from the day-care centers where working mothers are now leaving them on their way to their "demanding positions."

Other changes in *LHJ*'s editorial stance are likewise disconcerting. For one thing, the editors no longer look to Middle America for images of exemplary family life. The covers now feature some famous woman, not a nameless couple, and profiles of average American families have become infrequent, linked to some crisis, such as that gripping "farm women" and their families. So instead of learning how average American housewives and their husbands cope with their problems, the reader gets interviews on marriage and parenting with Lady Di and Shirley MacLaine, with Sally Field and Ted Kennedy, with actress Eileen Brennan and Latin singer Julio Iglesias. With celebrities posing as authorities on domestic matters, *LHJ* ends up promoting views peculiar for a "family magazine." MacLaine feels "comfortable playing prostitutes in movies" because she was "a prostitute in another life," and she believes it "important . . . that she have lovers." Shirley admonishes *LHJ* readers to practice "sexual openness in marriage." Iglesias, who sees the children from his failed marriage only on holidays, boasts to *LHJ* that he has "made love to not less than three thousand ladies" and that he would "love to have sex all the time."

Clearly, *LHJ* has lost its former fears about a sex-obsessed society. It appears that the more the cultural and domestic definition of womanhood is eroded, the more women must rely upon a nakedly physical and erotic sense of identity. So *LHJ* tells women it's perfectly all right to be more "sexy" in public now that "society's rigid sexual mores [have] loosened." Advice on picking a flattering swimsuit will help readers get started, while an article on the breast explains how to achieve a "prettier, firmer, sexier" bust-line to put in that new swimwear. Omitted in the article on the mammary gland is any discussion of lactation or infant nutrition: *Playboy* has triumphed over the La Leche League. *LHJ* has now also lost its admiration for puritanical Aussies and tells readers that they ought to regard "pregnancy, rather than adolescent sexual activity itself . . . as the major problem." And why should teenagers be the only ones to have fun? The reader is encouraged to act out her "naughty fantasy" so long as it's "with her husband." For readers whose imaginations need a boost, there are now plenty of ads for "explicitly sensual reading," fiction that cele-

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brates "passion—wild, free, and unashamed." In its celebrity-chasing, its fixation on physical attractiveness, and its promotion of sexual pleasure (preferably in marriage), *LHJ* has apparently revived the editorial profile found at *Cosmo* 25 years ago.

Given current trends, *LHJ* and *Cosmo* will soon both look like a combination of *Playgirl* and the *Wall Street Journal*. But linking the new eroticism and the new careerism is a single issue. "The issue," explains a candid recent *LHJ* article, "is really one of self—not sex. And that's intrinsically linked to finding an individual style and attitude rather than adopting those grounded in the past." Right now, encouraging women to cut loose from all traditional commitments to family and marriage and to indulge their "naughty fantasy" of self and sex may seem like a shrewd journalistic strategy. But if recent studies showing a negative correlation between reading skills and use of pornography are any indication, *Cosmo* and *LHJ* may soon discover that their former readers are too engrossed in video solipsism to bother with turning pages. (BC) cc

VITAL SIGNS

THEATER

On the Waterfront

by Caroline Morgan

Singin' in the Rain **; Based on the MGM film with choreography by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen; Screenplay and adaptation by Betty Comden and Adolph Green; Directed and choreographed by Twyla Tharp; Songs by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed; Presented by Maurice Rosenfield, Lois F. Rosenfield, and Cindy Pritzker, Inc.**

Big River**; Written by William Hauptmann, adapted from the novel by Mark Twain; Staged by Des McAnuff; Music and lyrics by Roger Miller; Presented by Rocco Landesman, Heidi Landesman, Rick Steiner, M. Anthony Fisher, and Dodger Productions.**

Singin' in the Rain, now playing in New York, is wonderful fun and a witty commentary on the world of Hollywood musicals. Unfortunately, the main focus of the plot—Don Lockwood's romantic interest in sweet-natured Kathy Selden—is weak. Lina Lamont, the blond bombshell who most definitely "ain't dumb," steals the show completely. I kept hoping for a miraculous twist in the plot that would give her a voice change, the starring role in talking pictures, and the guy.

Don Correia plays the leading man Don Lockwood, with impressive musical talent and excellent dancing. The *New York Times* critic complained about his lack of sex appeal, but the Correia I saw exuded enough warmth and gentleness to satisfy any reasonable woman.

Cosmo Brown, the dancing clown, projected the exuberance and enthusiasm of choreographer Twyla Tharp. She had the good sense to keep the original choreography of "Fit as a Fiddle," "Moses Supposes," "Good Mornin,'" and "Singin' in the Rain." Her wacky and offbeat dances in Act Two are staged as production numbers for musicals supposedly being filmed on sound stages. Apparently, anything goes (or went) in Hollywood musicals—roller skates from the 18th century, a dancing horse, feet fighters, French peasants learning to tap-dance, and a blues singer who materializes out of nowhere.

Gordon Willis (best known for his work in Woody Allen films, including *The Purple Rose of Cairo*) filmed the actual movies shown on stage. His sense of style and his attention to period detail are impeccable. The audience actually chuckled more during the film sequences than when the live actors were performing. Perhaps Americans are more comfortable with the two-dimensional medium of film than with live theater.

And does it rain! The downpour at the end of Act One soothed the psyches of drought-stricken New Yorkers. Don Correia threw himself into the scene with such gusto that he broke his umbrella. He was having such a good time that he barely noticed. The audi-

From left: Faye Grant, Peter Slutsker, Mary D'Arcy, and Don Correia. Photo by Kenn Duncan.

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ence will also find reasons to applaud the talents of Betty Comden and Adolph Green (who adapted their screenplay for the stage) and of director/choreographer Twyla Tharp. Now that she has flexed her musical muscles in this adaptation, I would love to see Tharp stage a totally original musical. With more attention to the fine points of acting, her high spirits might bring new life to a dying Broadway.

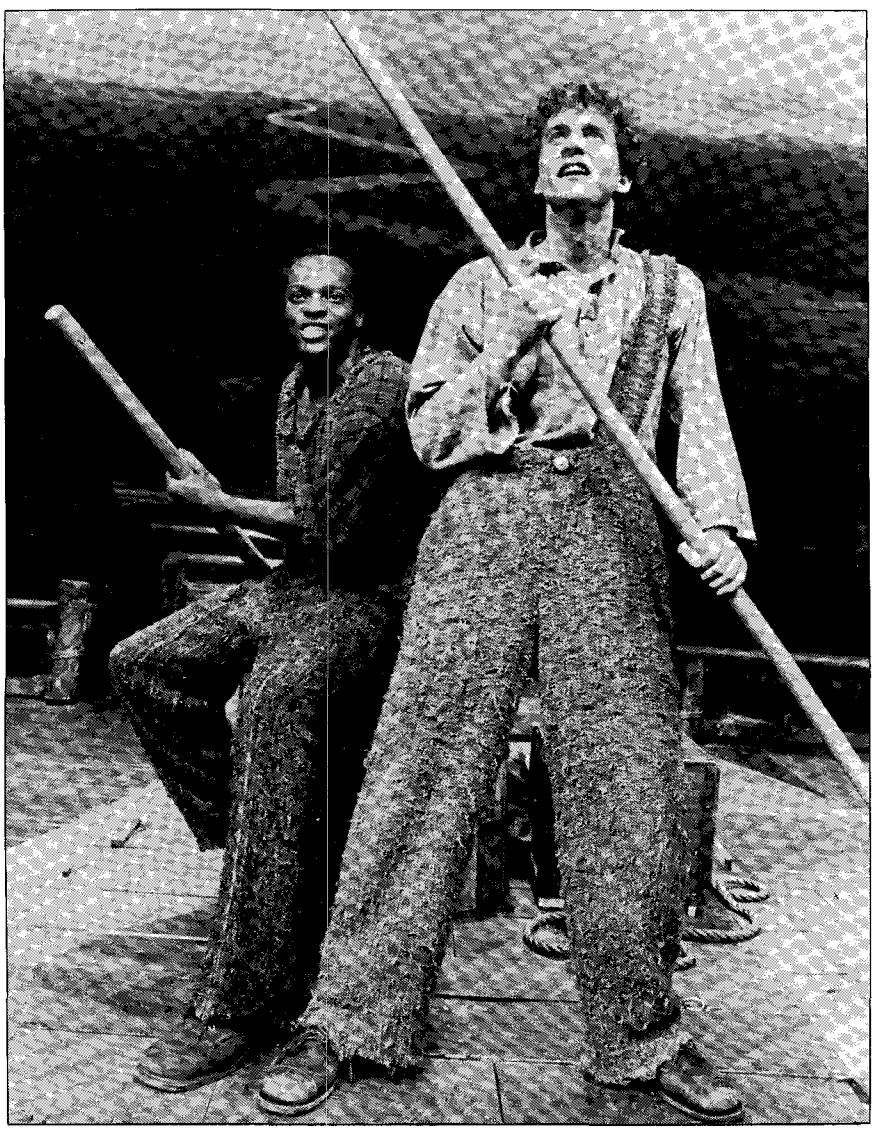
Big River was brought to Broadway by Dodger Productions, the same group that staged Jim Wann's rollicking *Pump Boys and Dinettes*. They maintain the same standard of excellence with *Big River*, a musical adaptation of *Huckleberry Finn*. Even before the curtain goes up, the audience is eased into a 19th-century country mood, with crickets chirping in the background and a handsome "antique" map of the Mississippi River Valley over the stage. As the houselights are dimmed, the map fades as the river glows in soft shades of blue. Heidi Landesman (scenic designer) and Richard Riddell (lighting designer) richly deserve their Tony Awards for this and similar effects.

John Short as Tom Sawyer and Daniel Jenkins as Huck Finn both are making their Broadway debut in *Big River*, and neither is a disappointment. This Huck and Tom are not as shiftless as their counterparts in Mark Twain's classic, but then, if they were, they'd probably have long ago left the Big Apple for Western territory. I somehow cannot imagine Huck as earnest as he is here, but never mind. As Huck announces at the end, he never would have started his story if he had known how much work it was going to be. Jenkins works so hard at being Huck (on stage almost continually) that the audience cannot help but like him and his performance, including the songs.

More Tony Awards went to Roger Miller for the songs and William Hauptmann for the dialogue. I would grade the 17 original songs as "B" work. (My son—Huck's age—was less impressed.) The songs in Act One are stronger than those in Act Two, which sounded a little sappy. The best-staged musical number is "When the Sun Goes Down in the South" with Huck, the King, and the Duke. The audience's favorite was "Hand for the Hog," a philosophical solo sung by Tom. I would also give a hand to the accomplished country blues musicians who provided the accompaniment.

Most of Act One takes place on and near the Mississippi, with an ingenious automated raft and the illusion of the river stretching out to the far horizon. Jim, superbly played by Ron Richardson (another Tony winner), makes the river come alive with his gestures and grand style of singing. The theatrical experience of Jim, Pap, the King, and the Duke gives their roles depth and interest, which Daniel Jenkins and John Short will be certain to develop as *Big River* settles in for a long, long run. cc

Caroline Morgan writes from New York.



Ron Richardson (l) and Daniel Jenkins (r) are featured in "Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Photo by Martha Swope.

SCREEN

Teenagers and Lower Forms of Life

***Kiss of the Spider Woman*; Directed by Hector Babenco; Written by Leonard Schrader; Based on the novel by Manuel Puig; Island Alive.**

While *Teen Wolf* was opening this past summer in 1,500 theaters, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* found only 15 receptive movie houses. This may seem odd, given that *Teen Wolf* is a formula flick,

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a werewolf comedy in which Lon Chaney Jr. would've felt at home, while *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is "Cinema" writ large, with William Hurt in his first post-*Big Chill* role (and one for which he received the 1985 Best Actor Award at Cannes); Raul Julia, who has a list of Tony nominations to his credit; and Sonia Braga, acclaimed as *the* Brazilian actress since her performance in *Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands*. Yet there are reasons for the American public's preference for *Teen Wolf* over *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, reasons more fundamental than simple philistinism.

At one point in *Kiss*, the homosexual character played by a henna-haired Hurt says with a voice edged in pique, "I don't explain my movies—that just *ruins* the emotion." The emotions in *Kiss* itself are so debased that explanation is simply irrelevant. Here we have two prisoners in a South American cell: Hurt as homosexual, Julia as revolutionary. Neither has a compelling sense of identity: Hurt thinks that only females can be "sensitive," so he has become a (wo)man; Julia has given up his upper-class girlfriend to become a small-time Ché because he cannot think his way past leftist slogans.

As the movie unfolds like a colorful but bespotted silk scarf, the two men exchange identities. The climax of the metamorphosis, and of the plot, is sealed with a kiss—footage of a real female spider consuming her mate would have been less depressing. As a result, the homosexual—who has previously lived in a fantasy world of 1940's B-movies spun in his head—leaves the prison determined to act as a revolutionary on behalf of his lover. The macho revolutionary, in turn, turns from Spartan to Sybarite.

For all of its deficiencies, *Teen Wolf* is honestly packaged: it's transparently a flimsy comedy made for the buck, a marketing device for popcorn, tickets, and sound tracks. No one going to see it can expect more. *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, on the other hand, is a fraud. Its producers and distributors represent it as serious art, a work of real substance. But the superficial manipulation of character and the facile repudiation of normative morality make *Kiss* a more disgusting film than any unpretentious entertainment made for adolescents. (GSV) cc

Old Dutch Buggies & New Asian Shrimp Boats

by Roland A. Alum Jr. and Tom Rojas

***Witness*; Directed by Peter Wier; Story written by William Kelly and Pamela & Earl Wallace; Screenplay by Earl Wallace and William Kelly; Paramount Pictures.**

***Alamo Bay*; Directed by Louis Malle; Written by Alice Arlen; Tri-State Release Studio.**

Both *Witness* and *Alamo Bay* explore the tensions that arise when dissimilar cultures meet, when people must meet the demands of an alien land. In *Witness*, a streetwise Philadelphia homicide detective, hardened by a climate of violence and corruption, must hide out among the peaceful Amish of rural Pennsylvania Dutch country. In *Alamo Bay*, a group of Vietnamese refugees flees its totalitarian-ridden nation only to find resentment in the southern Texas village where they had hoped to begin a new life.

On its surface, *Witness* appears to be a cops-and-robbers adventure intertwined with a love story. But it is really something far more haunting. The action focuses on an innocent eight-year-old Amish boy named Samuel (Lukas Hass), who embarks with his young, widowed mother Rachel (Kelly McGillis) in traveling south to visit relatives in Baltimore. However, the two are stranded at the magnificent Philadelphia railroad station, where the boy witnesses a bloody murder in the men's lavatory, unnoticed by the two assassins—although he almost gets caught by them. Harrison Ford (the star of *Indiana Jones* and other Lucas films) plays John Book, the tough policeman-hero assigned to the case. To protect his boyish witness, Book drives mother and son to their Amish farm in Lancaster County, but not before he is wounded in a parking-lot ambush. While recovering from his wounds, he lives for a time among these simple and pacific people who reject all modern technology and live by their own narrow rules. Known as "the English" (a blanket term the Amish apply to outsiders), Book is accepted primarily because of his industriousness and carpentry skills, his hobby in the city (and Ford's own real-life hobby according to his biographer, A. McKenzie [*The Harrison Ford Story*, 1984]).

Nascent love between Book and the beautiful Rachel can find no overt expression because of the consequences of breaking Amish folk law: ostracism, shunning, and expulsion. And though Samuel comes to see Book as a surrogate father, his grandfather warns him not to trust "the ways of the English."

Book finds it especially difficult to adopt the characteristic passivity of the Amish and ends up breaking the nose of a taunting hoodlum. A local merchant protests to the local police that the Amish must not do such things lest the tourists stop coming to see the "quaint" farmers. In the movie's climactic scene, the rough cop demonstrates that he has learned how to vanquish an enemy without modern weaponry, while his gentle hosts learn of evil's reality.

For many viewers, *Witness* will be their first introduction to the Amish. Germanic-Swiss-Dutch in origin, the Old Order Amish migrated to North America during the 18th century because of religious persecution. In this century, they have gained some notoriety because of their rejection of worldliness. As what sociologist Peter Berger would term a counter-modernizing movement, the Amish froze their culture about a century ago: they use neither electricity, telephones, nor motor vehicles. The Amish lead a disciplined life confined to a closed and self-sufficient religious community.

Some (including John Podhoretz in *The American Spectator*) see no idealization of pre-modern culture in *Witness*, no attack on modern America. But such romanticizing of the soi-disant "primitive" is evident in previous films by Director Peter Wier (e.g., *The Last Wave*, about Australian aborigines), and the Romantic conception of "the noble savage," a la Rousseau, lives on in *Witness*. This conception, as Brigitte Berger has repeatedly noted, has created a sort of reverse ethnocentrism in Western thinking.

On balance, the Amish have had to

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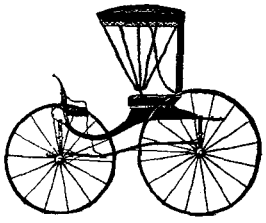
pay a price for their doctrines. Their no-tech pacifism made it impossible to protect themselves or the frontier with lethal force. And, as anthropologist Mary Douglas and political scientist Aaron Wildavsky remind us in *Risk and Culture* (University of California Press, 1982), the Amish are forever accusing one another of sinister alliances with the outside world and then expelling those judged guilty (as almost happens to Rachel in *Witness*).



Still, researchers have found that, through time, the Amish and kindred communities (Mennonites and Hutterites) do eventually make accommodations to the surrounding society. Although they do not normally proselytize, converts are reluctantly accepted. John Book declines that option, as will most viewers, but *Witness* is an exciting picture with superb acting. Though the depiction of the Amish seems to be sympathetic, the press has reported complaints from some Amish. How would they know? They are not supposed to watch movies. Will they now threaten boycott of the theaters?

Actually "based on a true story," *Alamo Bay* dramatizes the inter-ethnic conflicts that arise when Vietnamese immigrants settle in a Gulf Texas fishing town. Director Louis Malle, a French "enfant terrible," told *New York Times Sunday Magazine* (April 7, 1985) that the movie shows us the "outsider's need to belong." But it is not clear just who the real "outsiders" are, nor is it clear—at least until the very end—who has been cast as the film's hero.

At the center of the action is Glory (Amy Madigan), a pretty blond who runs a shrimp fishery with her recently widowed father, who does business with a local Vietnam veteran named Shang (Ed Harris). He is having an affair with Glory while trying to support his family through fishing. The pair become estranged when Glory defends the Vietnamese and Shang joins forces with the local Ku Klux Klan in trying to drive the refugees out of town. The leader of the Vietnamese, Dinh, tries to explain to the native Texans that his countrymen want only the right to work and enjoy their earnings, a right denied them in their native land by the invading communists.

The explanations fall on deaf ears, though, and the Asians are forced to leave town. When Dinh and a few friends later return to help Glory after her sick father dies, hostilities erupt, bringing the movie to a violent climax, typical of the old Western. Indeed, Dinh wears a cowboy hat and boots and is dubbed "the last cowboy left in Texas" by Glory when she hears how as a child he had survived for days alone in the jungle, eating grass, while hiding from the Vietcong who raided his village and killed relatives and neighbors. But in the end, "the last cowboy" needs to be rescued by a woman: Glory saves Dinh's life by shooting Shang.

The difficulties of the Vietnamese refugees depicted in *Alamo Bay* are not atypical. Since the fall of Saigon in 1975, about a quarter-of-a-million Vietnamese have come to the U.S. The largest communities are still found in California's cities, but some Indochinese have moved into coastal fishing areas and elsewhere. It is ironic that antitotalitarian exiles who flee their sovietized lands to find freedom are sometimes regarded with almost as much suspicion and distrust as the foes they left behind. The experiences of Eastern Europeans after World War II and more recently of the Cuban boat people have often paralleled that of the Vietnamese.

This country has gained strength from the successive waves of immigrants escaping political and religious persecution. After all, that is why the Amish—and the Pilgrims—came here, too. But one also needs to understand the uneasiness faced by isolated communities when outsiders with unfamiliar physical features, peculiar customs, and a strange tongue suddenly arrive en masse. The film handles these issues without really taking sides. It deals with the human anguish inherent in the mutual adaptation processes—a pain that may not be avoidable, paradoxically, in a pluralistic, open society such as ours.

Despite innumerable barriers, the Vietnamese—like other new Americans (especially of Asian extraction)—seem to be doing well here by most standards. As the film depicts, their success is largely due to their resiliency and drive, qualities which are, in the long run, compatible with American culture, even though these characteristics may cause frictions initially. "We thought the Vietnamese only wanted to work . . . for us," says a redneck in *Alamo Bay*, "but now they want to buy their own boats!" Entrepreneurship, that quintessentially American characteristic, turns refugees into competitors and fosters new social animosities. And while *Witness* concludes happily, with good people—metropolitan and Amish—prevailing over evil, the ending of *Alamo Bay* is ambivalent and anguished, reminiscent of a Greek tragedy: after killing her former lover, Glory must go to jail. Perhaps one message is that while America has developed a kind of nostalgic affection for its Amish, the difficulties of adjusting to the presence of newcomers is not yet over. cc

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ART

The Man Who Loved Birds

by Shehbaz H. Safrani

"I drew, I looked upon nature only; my days were happy beyond human conception." John James Audubon, who wrote these words, was born 200 years ago in Les Cayes, Haiti. To this day, he remains unrivaled as the greatest painter of birds, with the possible exception of Edward Lear (1812-1888). Unlike Audubon, though, Lear painted birds only for a short part of his career and soon moved on to painting topographical views and to writing some of the best limericks and nonsense rhymes in English literature.

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Audubon's birth, The New

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York Historical Society recently exhibited all of Audubon's 433 known original watercolors, painted for his monumental volume, *The Birds of America*. "Audubon's Birds of North America: The Original Watercolors," on view from mid-April to mid-September, also included in its displays other objects and artifacts illuminating Audubon's life and work.

"John James Audubon: Science Into Art," another special exhibition examining the scientific and artistic achievements of Audubon, opened on April 18 and closed on July 21 at the American Museum of Natural History. This exhibition of paintings, prints, documents, and memorabilia, chosen from the American Museum's collections, included two new, hand-colored *Birds of America* prints pressed from their original, restored copperplates. This will be the first hand-colored and restored issue of these particular plates since 1838, when the original edition of the *Birds of America* was completed. Both of these shows enhanced our knowledge and understanding of Audubon's stupendous lifelong devotion to painting the birds and beasts of North America.

The New York Historical Society may well be "New York's best kept secret." Located on Central Park West, it is adjacent to the American Museum of Natural History. Architecturally, these two venerable landmarks are the Castor and Pollux of New York's art world. The crowds—approximately two and a half million persons annually—converge on the American Museum. Visiting the Historical Society, on the other hand, is like being an honored guest at the home of the most civilized, cultivated, and well-heeled New Yorker. Once, not too long ago, two eminent Australian decorators told me that they had exactly a day to spend in Manhattan. Without batting an eye, I said, "The New York Historical Society." This museum has to be visited to be believed.

Founded in 1804, The New York Historical Society is the second oldest institution of its kind in the United States. It houses a distinguished research library and the city's oldest museum. In an extraordinary exchange, the Society many years ago gave the Brooklyn Museum some of its finest Egyptian, Assyrian, and Ancient Near-Eastern antiquities. The Society, in return, received material pertinent to New York's history. Over the past 180 years, the Society has acquired thousands of books, manuscripts, maps, newspapers, portraits, and other paintings, prints, photographs, and artworks of historical significance for

Original painting of red squirrels from The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America.

New York. Among the national treasures owned by the Society is the Audubon collection. That Audubon's works are in their keeping is understandable: when Audubon returned to the United States in 1839 from England, he settled in New York City and was buried in Manhattan in 1851.

Audubon was as demanding of others as he was of himself. To print his monumental series of plates, the great naturalist chose the paper of one of the most distinguished and innovative papermakers in Europe, James Whatman. Whatman not only produced a sheet of exceptional size, ideally suited to Audubon's purpose, but was probably the first manufacturer in Europe to produce a handmade wove paper. Wove paper provides a smooth surface pattern, while the distinctive surface pattern of traditional laid paper might have been aesthetically intrusive. Established in 1731, the Whatman paper mills eventually were dubbed "Turkey Mills," because of the richly colored "Turkey Red" fabric once produced there. By coincidence, one of Audubon's most famous birds is the turkey, long a favorite of Americans, especially Benjamin Franklin who felt, after all, that this beloved bird, rather than the bald eagle, should become the national bird.

Despite Audubon's claim to happiness "beyond human conception," his private affairs were miserable. In fact, both his fame and fortune are posthumous. In 1862, nearly 12 years after Audubon's death, his widow, Lucy Bakewell Audubon, offered to sell the Society 432 of the original 435 watercolors her husband had painted for the double "elephant folio" and later editions of his famous *The Birds of America*. The original edition of Audubon's works is called the elephant folio because of its physical dimensions, measuring over three feet in length and more than two feet in width. The plate size virtually fills the page.

The New York Historical Society raised the $4,000 purchase price for the 432 paintings and in June of 1863 acquired what is today a priceless treasure and one of the greatest works of natural history ever produced. The 433rd watercolor in this series was presented to the Society in 1966 by Mrs. Gratia R. Waters; the remaining two are presumed lost.

This exhibition marked only the third time that the entire collection has been open to public view, and the first time ever that the material was organized in taxonomic order —arranged as a modern field guide would be, to show the evolutionary relationship among the birds themselves. The presentation of the paintings in this way underscored Audubon's stature as a naturalist as well as an artist, worthy of the respect of the serious ornithologist as well as the casual bird-watcher.

Audubon was the first American artist to depict America's birds, both life-size and in their natural habitats. The significance of this groundbreaking accomplishment is often obscured for the contemporary observer accustomed to the close and detailed views of wildlife afforded by today's sophisticated optical equipment. Audubon's pioneering renderings of birds in the wild are the exclusive products of his keen capacity for observation, coupled with his extraordinary ability to cap-

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ture on the page what he saw in the wild. At a time when many of his colleagues worked in museums, drawing stuffed birds (against plain backdrops) whose poses were unnatural and whose plumage had been dulled by taxidermy, Audubon worked in the field, making sketches on the spot after long hours of walking and hunting. Incidentally, Edward Lear also sketched and drew from real life the birds he found in the menagerie at Knowsley Hall, property of the Earl of Derby, for whom he worked for four years.

My favorite portrait of Audubon hangs in the Green Room of the White House. It is a romantic portrait, depicting Audubon clad in a wolfskin coat, painted in Edinburgh in 1826 by the noted Scottish artist John Syme. Viewing this portrait, Audubon commented, "The eyes to me are more those of an enraged eagle than mine." Bird imagery filled Audubon's thinking even about himself.

Until lately, critics tended to regard Audubon's paintings of birds as romantic rather than scientific. This assessment has changed. At The New York Historical Society exhibition, Audubon's drawings were a reminder that they were a departure from earlier ornithological illustrations in that they were rich and vivid representations of the birds' characteristic behavior. As a result, they contributed to the scientific study of birds and the identification of new species. Roger Tory Peterson, the renowned ornithologist and author of *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies* (now in its fourth edition), has written that Audubon's "eyes must have been almost as sharp as those of a red-tailed hawk. Not merely 20/20 vision, but perhaps 20/5."

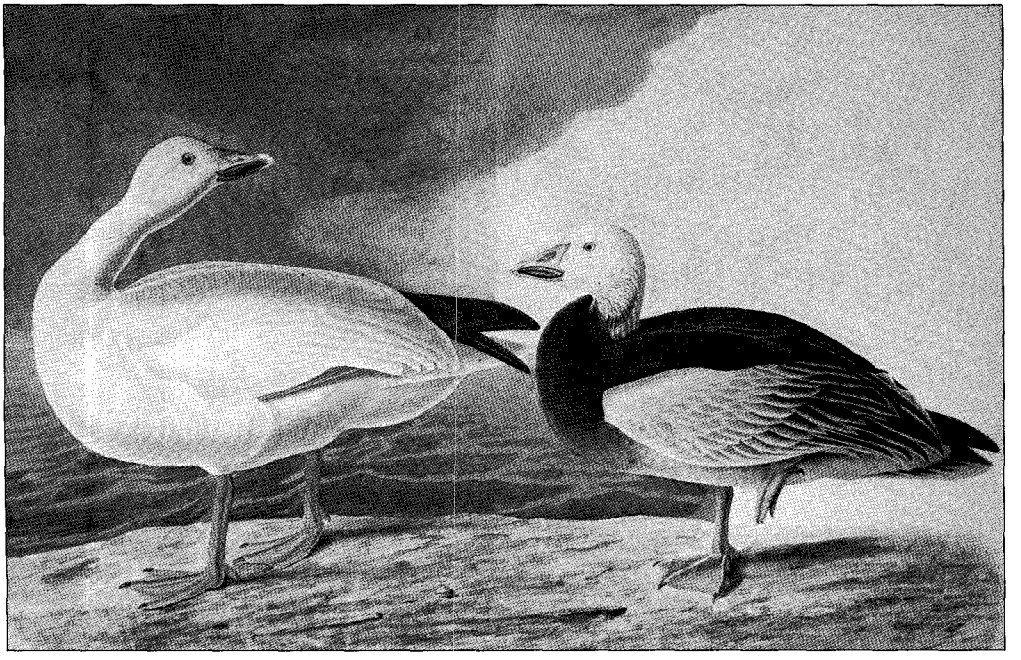
Small wonder that over the past century and a half, Audubon's paintings have endured as works of art. While depicting his subjects with accuracy, Audubon combined his images and colors with a keenly aesthetic sense of composition. True, Audubon did receive some art instruction, but he was largely self-trained. Techniques can be taught, but not so creativity. In one way or another, Audubon may indeed provide the best American example of how creativity in the visual arts triumphs eventually, if pursued long enough and sincerely.

The original watercolors displayed at the Society imparted a fresher and more immediate sense of Audubon's distinctive artistry than do the more widely known engravings executed by the English artist-engraver Robert Havell Jr. and hand-colored by colorists. While Audubon and his two sons, Victor Guifford and John Woodhouse, oversaw the actual processes of engraving and hand-coloring for the monumental original volume of *The Birds of America*, the actual engravings do differ in detail, style, vitality, and sensitivity from the paintings that inspired them. In the exhibition, these discrepancies were brilliantly illustrated by placing some of Havell's plates side by side with the corresponding watercolors.

Besides the paintings, the exhibition included previously unpublished drawings, preliminary sketches for the watercolors, a number of personal letters to and from Audubon, several portraits of Audubon, and sections of the original manuscript from Audubon's *Ornithological Biography*, the seven-volume narrative that accompanied the original double elephant folio. Also on display were the lap desk which Audubon used while sketching in the field, his personal portfolio in which he carried his sketches, other memorabilia, and the rare first volumes of the double elephant folio.

Because the American Museum of Natural History's "John James Audubon: Science Into Art" exhibition was planned in cooperation with the organizers of The New York Historical Society's Audubon show, the two exhibitions proved mutually complementary. The American Museum display was particularly rich in Audubon's mammal paintings. Executed in oil or watercolor, many of these works were painted as illustrations for *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*. Among the paintings from this period included in the exhibition were the *American Porcupine*, *Swift Fox*, and a painting of rats and mice inside a partially opened wooden case.

Ordinarily, rodents are not among the creatures we consider beautiful. Yet when viewing them, I acquired leaden feet: consumed by the beauty of the artistry, I stood immobilized in front of Audubon's work, gazing. Audubon's painting of rats and mice devouring the contents of a small crate of eggs convinced me that any creature, even a rodent, can be appealing when depicted by a master. Equally compelling were the works of several collaborators of Audubon: Joseph Mason, George Lehman, Maria Martin, and Audubon's sons, John and Victor. In



"Blue and Snow Goose." Original watercolor for Havell plate 381. From the exhibition "Audubon's Birds of North America: The Original Watercolors." Collection of the New-York Historical Society.

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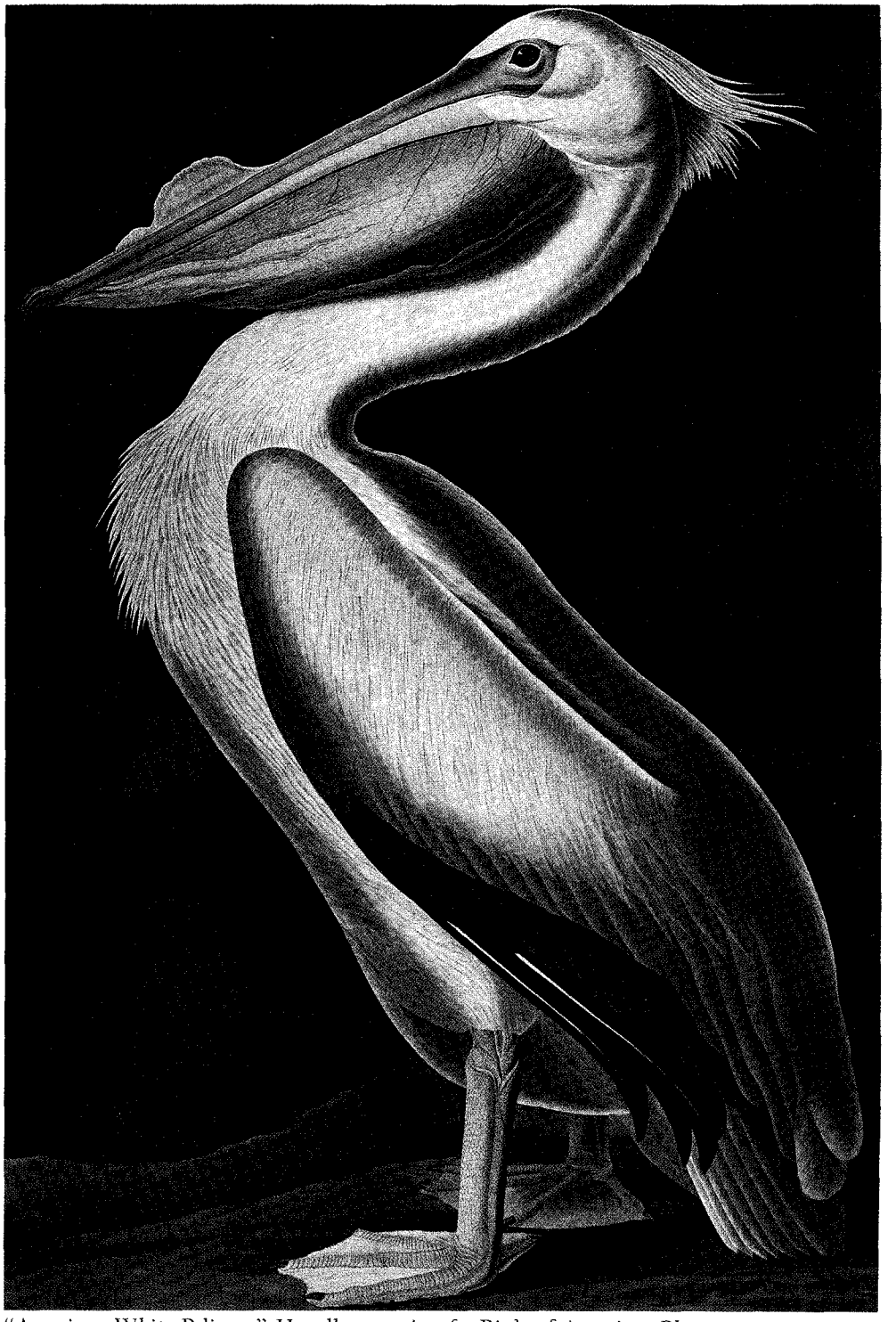
keeping with the practices of contemporary painters, Audubon often allowed his colleagues to complete the backgrounds of his paintings. Their landscapes and botanical specimens enriched and enlarged Audubon's oeuvre. (One must remember that Franz Synder painted some of the best animals in the canvases of Peter Paul Rubens.) To better locate Audubon in his milieu, the American Museum's show included handsome books illustrated by Mark Catesby, William Bartram, Alexander Wilson, Thomas Nuttall, John Kirk Townsend, and Titian Peale.

One of the most impressive areas in the American Museum—the *Audubon Hall*—is open only by special arrangement with its Ornithology Department. It was a rare delight that items housed here, rarely viewed by the public, were included in this show. Especially known for his lifelike watercolors of birds, Audubon devised a method of wiring specimens in lifelike positions and mounting them on a gridded board. The exhibition included such a model compared with a finished painting of the same bird. Equally intriguing was a display that contrasted the original *Birds of America* prints with copies painted by Joseph Bartholomew Kidd, the artist employed by Audubon to duplicate portions of his work in oil.

Together, these two shows enabled visitors to reflect upon Audubon and his achievements. His life itself is full of contradictions. At 18, he emigrated to the United States, probably to avoid conscription into Napoleon's army. After his marriage to Lucy Bakewell, an English neighbor of Audubon's in America, he moved to Kentucky and later to Ohio, where a series of commercial ventures resulted in bankruptcy. It was at the age of 40 that Audubon first conceived *Birds of America*, secured a publisher in London, and began marketing his project to the widest possible audience. His emphasis on behavior and habitat signaled a changing approach to the natural world. Animals were finally perceived as living, breathing creatures with life histories of their own, rather than as the isolated, one-dimensional creatures seen in most art before 1827. Although eminent in his twilight years, Audubon died an impoverished man. He would have found it incredible that 130 years after his death a single set of his engravings (sold individually) would auction for $1,716,660, with the single engraving *The Great Blue Heron* bringing $30,800. Audubon spent the last years of his life on an estate overlooking the Hudson River in upper Manhattan, what is now Washington Heights. He is buried at 155th Street and Broadway, where a memorial, carved with the images of birds, marks his grave. cc



"American White Pelican." Havell engraving for Birds of America. *Photo courtesy Sotheby's, New York.*

Shehbaz Safrani is a writer and painter based in New York City.

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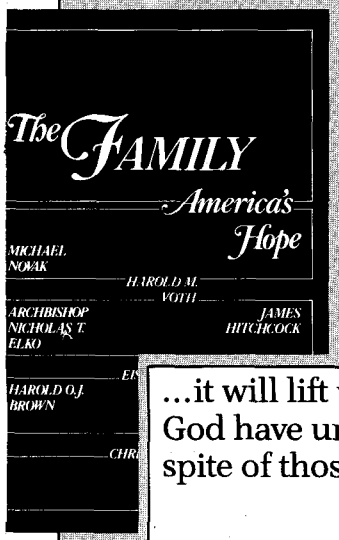

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